TRANSLATION AS A SOCIALLY SYMBOLIC ACT: TRANSLATIONS OF THE ANCIENT GREEK CONCEPT OF 'DEMOCRACY' IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY BRITAIN

by

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References

Because of the importance attaching to the original date of publication I shall cite this first, followed by the reprint or edition used. Thus for example Kant 1784[1]; 1998 refers both to the work originally published in 1784 and the translation published in 1998.

Abstract

The aim of this thesis is to employ an historical, non-prescriptive approach to translation, in order to examine the social constitution and role of translations of the ancient Greek concept of democracy in nineteenth-century Britain. For this purpose it develops two levels of argumentation in parallel. On the one hand, it suggests the necessity to historicise both the production of translation works and the concepts, methods and precepts of historiographic analysis by which these works become the object of knowledge and understanding. In this sense, part of this thesis focuses on a range of contemporary models for translation research, with particular emphasis on the notion of translation norms, in order to discuss their theoretical problematic, but also to trace their roots in conceptions of translation, knowledge and society developed in the intellectual and political tradition of modernity. On these grounds, it seeks to advance an understanding of translation that defines the translated text as a symbolic articulation of the social conditions that brought it into being, and also as a response to these conditions, which acts to channel them into new directions by rewriting them in a novel form of expression. On the other hand, this theoretical framework is employed and further qualified by the historical analysis of translations of the concept of democracy in Britain. The primary texts used for this purpose are: translations of Thucydides' *History of the Peloponnesian War*, which define democracy in relation to conceptions of social organisation and structures; translations of Plato's *Protagoras*, which define democracy in relation to the notion of subjective autonomy and freedom; translations of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, which relate democracy to an ethics of duty; and translations of Sophocles' *Antigone*, which relate democracy to the concepts of justice and laws. These works are shown to have developed as a reaction to absolutist forms of politics and an endorsement of the liberal-democratic ideals that sustained the establishment of Britain as a modern bourgeois society. It is thus argued that translations from classical Greek acted to legitimise a political system that was directly related to the historical advancement of industrial capitalism and the challenging of older social structures and relations this enterprise entailed, by providing new social models to an ideologically perplexed audience that lacked a clear sense of its social and political identity. This move was realised by a process of transformation and manipulation of the source texts, which related democracy to an abstract ideal of formal individual freedom and equality and defined democratic politics as a system of contestable social hierarchies that was presumed to establish the rational basis for political decisions in a modern civilised society. This seemingly consistent ideological discourse was, however, at the same time interrupted and fragmented by conceptual gaps, contradictions and antinomies, which were inscribed in the translated texts and formed the precepts of a critique and problematisation of their historical context. The conclusion of this study turns from the nineteenth-century to the present context and seeks to reflect on the repercussions of modern thought on translation, knowledge and democracy for contemporary theorising.

The act of knowing is not like listening to a discourse already constituted, a mere fiction which we have simply to translate. It is rather the elaboration of a new discourse, the articulation of a silence.

Pierre Macherey, *A Theory of Literary Production*. Transl.Geoffrey Wall.

INTRODUCTION

WHY STILL WASTE OUR TIME ON REWRITES?[1] AND HOW? PROBLEMS OF METHOD IN HISTORICAL TRANSLATION RESEARCH

1. The Genesis and Significance of Translation Studies

In a pioneering essay on models and methods in translation research, James Holmes deplored the fact that

> for all their prime importance in the history of European literature, translations have by and large been ignored as bastard brats beneath the recognition (let alone concern) of truly serious literary scholars ... [Yet,] the appalling thing, really, is not that there are, comparatively, so few studies, but that so many of the studies that have been made are so haphazard, so piecemeal, so normative. And so naïve in their methodology (1978:69).

This consciously polemical assertion was made in 1976, in an international colloquium on *Literature and Translation* held at the University of Leuven, in Belgium. It was shared, in one way or another, by the majority of Holmes' co-participants in the colloquium; a number of scholars mainly from Israel, the Low Countries and Britain, whose dissent from the mainstream approaches to translation at the time, had directed them toward a radical reconsideration of key concepts in literary and cultural theory and allowed them to articulate the methodological directions for a new field of research aiming at the systematic, non-normative and historically oriented study of translated texts.[2] The work of this group was inspired by the striking observation that cultural and literary theory, in their traditional institutional forms, have either eliminated translations from our intellectual history or have reserved for them a predominantly negative and haphazard vocabulary, which invites us to perceive the phenomenon of translation as a marginal, essentially imperfect and uninteresting mode of writing. Itamar Even-Zohar, a writer who was to become a leading figure for the new approach during the next decades, found this fact important enough to make it the starting point of his influential essay "The Position of Translation within the Literary Polysystem", which was also presented at the colloquium. This work stressed, with genuine surprise, that despite the broad recognition of the role translation has played in the shaping and crystallisation of national cultures "it is amazing to realize how little research has been done in this field, on either the theoretical or the descriptive level" (1978a: 117).

This shared amazement was both accurate and fruitful. The well-established devaluation of translation and the consequent lack of scholarly interest in its study was, and is

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[1] The title refers to André Lefevere's article "Why Waste Our Time on Rewrites? The Trouble with Interpretation and the Role of Rewriting in an Alternative Paradigm" (1985).

still, conspicuous at different levels of our social life: from the organisation of disciplinary divisions in academic institutions and the laws of copyright to the published criticisms of translated texts and the conventional scholarly discourses on the nature and methods of translation study. In British universities translation departments have been relatively limited in numbers, while more often than not they tend to conceal themselves under the name of more established disciplines: literary theory, linguistics, comparative literature, cultural studies.[3] It is not without significance that an article published in the *Times Literary Supplement* in 1980 and included in the subsequent editions of the *Oxford English Dictionary* under the lemma 'translation' describes a translation theorist as "one of the very few people in the world working in this field".[4] To complete this institutional setting, several national and international copyright laws do not quite recognise translation as an intellectual production which is equal with an original one, and reserve, as Lawrence Venuti has argued, an exclusive right in derivative works for the author of a text, despite the will or intentions of the translator (1998:50).[5]

Holmes and Even-Zohar's discontent is further substantiated when we consider both our commonsensical and scholarly conceptions of translation. Criticism of translated texts seems, indeed, to be almost compulsively inclined to condemn irredeemable mistakes and inadequacies, to point out how, after all, a translation falls short of a source text, except perhaps for those few cases when translation is viewed as 'original' writing *per se*, when it actually 'loses' its 'non-creative' and 'secondary' features. The majority of translations are thus described in negative terms, as a kind of derivative mass-production, which at best plays the humble role of compensating for our linguistic limitations, while at worse violates the depth and beauty of great pieces of literature, by essentially (and necessarily paradoxically) lacking the one and unique quality available to it: faithfulness to the semantic depth and aesthetic forms of original literary writing.

Had it been coherent and homogeneous, the above image would have hardly attracted attention. The development of a critical stance towards a given intellectual order can only emerge from a pre-existing condition of disjunctions and inconsistencies – however implicit

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[2] The colloquium "Literature and Translation" resulted in the publication of a volume with the same title, edited by James S. Holmes, José Lambert and Raymond van den Broeck in 1978.

[3] While it is not possible to draw generalised conclusions on the status of translation studies in the contemporary academic world, it seems that the systematic study of translation (which is not taken to mean merely the technical training of translators) has only recently developed into an autonomous discipline, and cannot be said to occupy a central position in the already devaluated and marginalized human sciences. I am not aware of any systematic research on the topic. I did nevertheless find illuminating references on this issue in relation to Western European and North-American universities in Venuti (1998), Pym (1998), Bush (1998) and Round (1988).

[4] O.E.D. s.v. 'translation'. (Cf. *Times Literary Supplement*, 12 Sept. 1980: 992-993).

[5] For a further discussion of translation in relation to copyright laws see Venuti 1995a.

these may be – not when this order is experienced as an irreplaceable and unified way of conceiving reality. Voices of dissent can be heard when a state of consensus begins to lose its stability, when it reveals fissures and paradoxes, not when it is smoothly compatible with the ways intellectual communities perceive and describe their objects. And while these voices become recognisable at the moment they manage to escape isolation, when their multiplication entails not merely a quantitative but a qualitative transformation of the framework within which they are situated, one can always trace them back in history and discover the conditions which foreshadowed their development and the thinkers of the past who were capable of rising 'ahead of their time' and glimpsing future potentials. There is, of course, an unavoidable degree of bias when one attempts to identify shifts in the history of ideas, when one seeks to prioritise those moments at which dissent from a dominant model of thought produces a qualitative change, or more accurately, when quantitative differentiation is transformed, if only by the sheer force of numbers, into a qualitative one. Periodisation is then more a conventional point of reference, than a representation of radical alterations that erase, totally dispel, older ideas and establish new ones. Yet, once their constructed and conventional nature is acknowledged, historical periods may serve to indicate moments at which theoretical schemes do separate themselves from their predecessors, changes whose establishment may not erase, but certainly corrodes previous convictions and makes their future survival seem more unlikely and less relevant to a set of new cultural and social conditions.

This is precisely the significance the 1976 colloquium acquires in the context of this thesis. It marks a moment of transformation, which was not an individual articulation of dissent, but the collective initiation of a dialogue that developed much further than expressing the mere discontent of participants with pre-existing translation-conceptions. For despite their dedications to diverse methodological approaches and theoretical agendas, the thinkers who worked, studied and communicated during the last three decades within the field named by André Lefevere *Translation Studies* (1978: 234-235) have produced a visible (because qualitative) theoretical and institutional change: they have created the space and tools for a novel, non-prescriptive and historically-oriented understanding of translation production. This change did not of course mean the elimination of "haphazard" and "essentialist" definitions of translation. What it did entail was the potential for conceiving these definitions from a different viewpoint, a perspective which could render apparent their intrinsic contradictions and inconsistencies, and enable us to study translations not in order to discover their 'faults' and 'infidelities', but in order to understand their historical shaping, illuminate conditions that can account for their canonicity, and describe their role as relatively autonomous and

socioculturally significant phenomena. As Susan Bassnett and Lefevere argued twenty-two years after the Leuven colloquium,

> A tremendous change, perhaps the most tremendous change in the field of translation occurred not when more and more interfields were added, but when the finality, the goal of work in the field was drastically widened. In the 1970s, translation was seen ... as "vital to the interaction between cultures". What we have done is to take this statement and stand it on its head: if translation is, indeed, as everybody believes, vital to the interaction between cultures, then why not take the next step and study translation, not just to train translators, but precisely to study cultural interaction? (1998a: 6)

As with all genuine dialogues, this change was hardly formed on the basis of intellectual consensus. It indicated a shared distance, a disengagement from a certain thought-mode, but not the identification with a common new one; a shift of focus, which brought to light previously dismissed objects, but not necessarily an agreement as to the means with which these objects could be classified and interpreted; a number of common questions and problems, but not the articulation of common answers; a shared goal, succinctly described by Lefevere as "the problems raised by the production and description of translations" (1978: 234), but certainly not shared routes for its attainment. The methodological diversity of contemporary Translation Studies is, I think, both unavoidable and fruitful. Once the focus of one's research is no longer the assertion of ideal equivalence relations, but the study of translation within culture and within society, as an objective and real historical phenomenon, one cannot afford to have one-dimensional, unified translation descriptions. The object of one's research becomes unstable and differentiated, not merely because translations themselves have been historically diverse, but also because we look at them from disparate methodological positions, we read them on the basis of various and often oppositional convictions and hypotheses, through which we become able to define what translation has been and how it has functioned in different historical societies. This plurality of research models is therefore the unavoidable outcome of genuine historical research, which does not seek to reveal its object through the means of a simplistic empiricism, a process of searching deeper into the past *per se*, while remaining unaware of its own tools and means of analysis, but enables the development of an interpretive space within which diverse readings of history can be accommodated, without any of them being considered as final and incontestable. It is precisely this diversity of positions, which is nevertheless harboured by the higher unity of a shared space for conversation, that has constituted the methodological foundations and perspective of the present study: the space created by historical and relatively autonomous translation research, as this has been developed during the last three decades within the field of Translation Studies.

Apart from the expression of an intellectual debt, which is itself no less meaningful than the exploration of methodological issues, this acknowledgement has a number of implications for the development of my thesis. When it is asserted that this study locates itself within the historical paradigm of translation research, this means, first and foremost, that it will not concern itself with a set of problems and questions which would indeed have been meaningful within a traditional prescriptive framework, but which seem to lose their significance when seen from an historically-oriented perspective, and will only initially be preoccupied with the issues and dilemmas brought to light by the encounter of prescriptive and historical models of translation theory. To be sure, the need to keep a line of inter-paradigmatic communication open is indisputable, since only such a line can enable the constant testing and criticism of one's methods and hypotheses. Yet it is neither possible nor fruitful to focus exclusively on such a dialogue, which, however productive, is unavoidably preventive of configuring and elaborating a paradigm's internal vocabulary and methods; a process which necessitates the drawing of conceptual distinctions and theoretical categories that can only be achieved once some fundamental level of agreement has already been established. This means that while the encounter between historical and prescriptive models for translation analysis has admittedly raised a set of methodological problems that should not be easily dismissed by contemporary research, the fundamental question behind my own work is not so much whether we should study translations as part of historical cultural productions (to which the answer is yes), but how this process of historicisation can be deepened and valorised, how it can be nourished and refined by the insights of the rest of social and cultural sciences, and how, finally it can develop a set of theoretical hypotheses and research models, which would not only seek to do justice to the reality of our object, but would also allow us to perceive and criticise the more immediate reality of our own approach to it. In other words, my main concern is not, or not only, to endorse and justify the historical turn in the study of translation against prescriptive approaches, but to discuss, within the 'historicist' or 'descriptive' or 'culturalist' paradigm, how this turn can be fully materialised.

In practical terms this position initially entails that the choice of my object, the *translations* of the Greek concept of *δημοκρατία* ('democracy') into English during the nineteenth century, as well as the main position and aim of my research, an *historical* analysis of these translations, are not going to be justified at any length, precisely because such a justification has been articulated by the theoretical works on which this study is based. This does not have to mean the uncritical acceptance of already established positions and hypotheses, to which historiographic translation research, such as the present one, contributes

nothing further than a mere confirmation or negation. Clearly this route is *de facto* unavailable, not only because of the interdependence of theoretical thought and particularised historiographic narratives, but also because of the irreducible diversity of research models in the discipline, which necessitates the adoption and justification of specific perspectives and methodological tools in order to proceed to a coherent translation analysis and a consistent historical interpretation. Neither does this acknowledgement mean that the predominant position assumed by this thesis, that translations play a significant role in our social and cultural history, which can be illuminated by historiographic research, is not going to be tested against the particular development and function of translation in the historical context in question. Yet it does mean that my study begins with a set of hypotheses – the need to examine past translation production, the priority of historical translation analysis over prescriptive approaches and so on – which, while not altogether axiomatic, are seen as establishing its point of departure and methodological foundations. I shall then seek to clarify these hypotheses and map the theoretical territory within which this thesis is located by seeking, initially, to delineate a definition of my object. Thus the question that will concern us in the next pages of this introduction is: 'what is translation'? Or, more accurately, what is translation from the point of view of historical translation research?

2. On Defining the Object of Translation Research: Historical Translation Studies and its Interlocutors

A way of approaching definitions of translation within the context of historical translation studies is to locate these definitions in the framework of a dialogue among three imaginary interlocutors. The first one, which is present for the longest period in the field, is the so-called prescriptive paradigm, which is predominantly concerned with applications of translation theory: it seeks to teach what translations should be and prescribe how to produce them. While this concern is, of course, as old as translations themselves,[6] its phase that is of the utmost relevance to our discussion is the period that begins with the introduction of linguistics into translation theory in the fifties and sixties; a time during which a number of translation theorists employed research models offered by the Saussurean, Hallidayan, Firthian, and, less often, Chomskyan traditions, in order to define translation and draw some conclusions on how to practise it. The second of these interlocutors, which was initially formed in an attempt to oppose prescriptive theories, is the descriptive-historical paradigm, which developed along the lines of the Leuven colloquium, but articulated more clearly its methods and theoretical

[6] In a collection which seeks to map the development of Western translation theories, Douglas Robinson traces a concern with the production of translation back to Herodotus (1977).

directions during the following decades. The third interlocutor is more complex to define and certainly far less homogeneous than the others, but can nevertheless be considered for our purposes under a unified category, which would consist of the various conceptions and uses of translation in other fields of the human and social sciences, and more particularly those concerned with historiographic and intercultural understanding. Clearly such a category, which is the product of a conscious generalisation, is not meant to imply a reduction of the diversified uses of translation in contemporary theoretical thinking in the humanities. It can nevertheless be justified on the grounds that my approach to these conceptions takes place from the perspective of translation research *per se*, and is therefore intended to illuminate the role of this broader discourse in forming the vocabulary and methods of translation analysis, rather than seeking to engage with the meanings and uses of translation within a philosophical, cultural, social or historical frame of reference.

2.1 The 'Prescriptive' Paradigm

While it is certainly a mistake to identify prescriptive approaches to translation with the exclusive employment of linguistics,[7] there are probably good historical reasons to suggest that the majority of scholars who have proposed prescriptive models for translation research in the last four or five decades have found in linguistics a fertile repository of theories and methods of analysis. Starting with Firth's descriptions of translation as a communicative phenomenon (1956[1];1968 and 1968) and J. C. Catford's attempt to investigate and codify the conditions of translation equivalence in 1965, the systematic analysis of language in itself and language in its interrelation to communication processes, culture and society that has been developed by linguists in the last few decades, has provided translation research with invaluable insights for the study of translated texts in their links both to source texts and the communicative conditions of the target context. My interest here however lies neither in assessing the contribution of linguistics to translation theory,[8] nor in attempting a detailed

[7] As Mona Baker has argued, there is a wide range of historical approaches to translation which have fruitfully employed linguistic models in order to approach translations from an historical viewpoint and discuss their sociocultural implications (2000; forthcoming). A similar point is implied by Bassnett's emphasis on the potential contribution of Firth's view of language to our understanding of the social nature of translation writing (1980[1]; 1991: 21). There is a significant corpus of research which can justify this position. The work of Basil Hatim and Ian Mason (1990; 1997), Peter Fawcett (1995; 1997a) and Mason (1994), which employs discourse analysis and critical linguistics in order to illuminate the ways ideology and relations of power are unconsciously inscribed in the language of the translated text cannot be taken to constitute a prescriptive approach to translation, although other aspects of the work of the above scholars may be seen as contributions to the prescriptive paradigm.

[8] While there is a wide discussion of the "unhappy marriage" of linguistics and translation theory, the majority of those involved in it tend to identify linguistics with a purely prescriptive point of view, which they either seek to defend or attack, thus evoking an unjustified generalisation that fails to take into account developments in both fields. There is however also a fairly recent attempt to initiate a more genuine and 'impartial' dialogue on this issue evidenced in the later works of Baker (2000; forthcoming), Maria Tymoczko (2000) as well as in a number of discussions that have taken place in Translation Studies conferences, e.g. the debate on *Translation and*

presentation of prescriptive translation models, but in seeking to illuminate a shared logic that underlies conceptions of translation suggested by these models; an interpretive code employed by otherwise diversified theories, through which translation phenomena are approached in both their historical and ideal forms, as products of reality and simultaneously as the potential outcomes of prescriptive directions.

This logic finds justification in an attempt to get reality right. "The main reason for formulating a translation theory", as Peter Newmark wrote, "is the appalling badness of so many published translations" (1981: 4-5). That is to say, the main objective of theoretical research is defined as the constitution of a set of normative rules by which existing translations can be assessed and criticised, so that we can develop a standard for better and more efficient translation practice. This standard, which has been described in terms of 'translation fidelity' and, more recently, 'equivalence', establishes a particular kind of relationship between the source and target text as the necessary presupposition for the acceptance of a text as a (good) translation. What this supposition entails is that equivalence, as Sandra Halverson has argued, is determined by a dual status: as an object of study and as a standard for the differentiation of translation from similar activities which also produce derivative texts, such as paraphrase, adaptation and so on. The contention behind this ambiguous mode of signification, Halverson points out, is that if equivalence is sufficiently defined, then the limits of translation will be discernible, as it is required by true scientific research. Its predominant implication is that "the equivalence relationship itself requires a status above and beyond that of object of study" (1997:212-213); a significance which claims to be neither contingent nor relative, even if its accomplishment is taken to rely on culturally specific and differentiated translation choices.

More often than not this equivalence relation has been defined as the result of a process of 'transfer', 'replacement' and 'reproduction' of the original, especially in linguistically-oriented approaches to translation developed between the fifties and seventies.[9] Hence Catford suggested that translation should be seen as "the replacement of textual material in one language (SL) by equivalent material in another language (TL)" (1965: 20), i.e. a process of textual reproduction. Eugene Nida's and Charles Taber's work on Biblical translation broadened this conception by taking into account the effect of a text on its original audience as a separate objective of translation equivalence. Translating was thereby described

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Norms, which took place at the University of Sheffield (Schäffner 1999), and the conference on *Research Models in Translation Studies* co-organised by the University of Manchester and UCL. On this issue see also Delabastita (1992), Baker (1996a) and Venuti (1998: 21-25).

[9] The division between earlier linguistic approaches to translation (1950s-1970s) and contemporary ones (from the 1980s onwards) has been suggested by Baker (2000).

as consisting "in reproducing in the receptor language the closest natural equivalent of the source language message", which does not merely necessitate the reproduction of its "form and content" ("formal equivalence"), but also the reproduction of the "effect" of the source text on the target culture ("dynamic equivalence") (Nida and Taber 1969; Nida 1964: 159-60). Generally speaking the thrust of translation research in this context, as Mona Baker points out, was that specific guidelines had to be developed in order "to ensure that translators had a set of ready-made, reliable solutions for linguistic difficulties" which were perceived as essentially formal in nature: lack of equivalence at word level, culture-specific items, difficulties in transferring syntactic structures, non-matching of grammatical categories such as gender and so on (2000: 21-22). The overcoming of these difficulties and the achievement of an ideal, or at least the best possible, equivalence was – and for many still is – the predominant aim of theoretical translation research.

This objective was nevertheless disputed at the very moment it was articulated, not least because all translations – even the ones suggested in the classroom – are notoriously unfaithful when assessed by a standard of total transfer or identity. Hence while working on the rules for a perfect equivalence relationship, translation theorists were also certain that this relationship is in fact an impossibility, that translation as a complete reproduction of the source text can never be achieved in actual historical conditions. This ambiguous thesis, which claims the unrealisable nature of the very task it sets out to determine, was presented in Catford's conception of 'shifts' in translation, which recognised that changes are inherent in the translation process (1965: 73-82), and was explicitly conveyed by Nida's rejection of the potential for 'full' translation, his conviction that "there are, properly speaking, no such things as identical equivalents" (Nida 1964: 159-60).[10] This conviction, as Theo Hermans argues, necessitated the conception of a weaker definition of equivalence as implying similarity, analogy, correspondence, or matching "of a certain kind, to a certain degree and on certain levels only", such as the denotative, connotative, pragmatic and so on (1991: 157). The crucial point not to be missed in this move is that this 'partial' equivalence is simultaneously an ideal one, since this partial matching or similarity continues to set up a standard for the definition of translation: it delineates the best possible solution to transfer problems, and therefore the best possible form of translation practice.

It was precisely this conception that was called into question by historically-oriented translation research and was criticised by Holmes as "piecemeal" and "haphazard" (above), on the grounds that the standard of equivalence it evoked could not justify its status as above or

beyond its object. For if total or maximum equivalence is acknowledged as plainly unattainable, as Hermans points out, there seem to be no secure transhistorical standards for the definition of that "minimum equivalence" required for a given text to be defined as a translation (1991: 157). For if, on the one hand, we claim that only some aspects of the meaning, form and/or effect of the source text are essential for translation production, we leave open to questioning the reasons for which we would choose to prioritise these particular source-text features instead of others. This is not to say that such choices are not made by translators, but rather to suggest that the criteria by which translation theory establishes one of them instead of another are not essentially different to those adopted by actual translation practice. They are both based on contingent, historical convictions as to what constitutes a translation, and thus none of the them can justify its positioning above or beyond the other. If on the other hand we assume that actual translations are always partial, but we can nevertheless define full equivalence in theoretical terms, as an ideal but unrealisable model, one may legitimately ask how we are able to conceive and articulate this ideal, given the lack of such potential from a target-language perspective. If, in other words, we view all translations as evidence of their impossibility, is it feasible to claim, at the same time, that theoretical contemplation can itself provide the yardstick for the measurement of a total, but nevertheless inconceivable translation equivalence? Does not theory also adhere to particular meanings of equivalence, does it not "collude", as Bassnett puts it, "to alternative notions of translations" as much as imperfect translators and rewriters do (1998: 39)?

In the development of both linguistics and translation theory in the eighties and nineties the notion of equivalence is qualified and becomes more complex, but its essential features are never abandoned, even by clearly functional approaches to translation, such as *Skopos* theory.[11] What becomes, however, far less popular is the assertion of its unique and transhistorical nature, the supposition that definitions of translation equivalence should exclusively focus on linguistic features and/or function of the source text and the problems that emerge in attempts to reproduce them. For contemporary theorists who approach translation from a pedagogic and prescriptive point of view, equivalence is not the ideal, but

[10] The same idea is concisely presented in the title of a recent article by Nida, in which translation is described as both "Possible and Impossible" (1996).

[11] *Skopos* theory argues that equivalence may only be one of the possible aims of the translator but cannot provide an overarching definition of translation. According to Katharina Reiss and Hans J. Vermeer, this definition should be determined on the basis of the translation's 'adequacy' to the '*skopos*', that is the communicative function of the translated text, which should aim to be the same as that of the source text (Nord 1997: 9-10, 34-36). My knowledge of *Skopos* theory (and the tradition of German translation theories) through predominantly secondary sources does not legitimise an affirmative articulation of this point. What I only want to suggest is that the claim that translation should aim to achieve a similarity in terms of 'communicative function'

unrealisable recovery of a static original, but a relationship that is contingent and relative as much to constraints imposed by the source text as to conceptual structures and historical conditions of the target context. As Werner Koller has pointed out,

> equivalence is a relative concept in several respects: it is determined on the one hand by the historical-cultural conditions under which texts (original as much as secondary ones) are produced and received in the target culture, and on the other by a range of sometimes contradictory and scarcely reconcilable linguistic-textual and extra-linguistic factors and conditions (1995: 196).

This thesis manifests a significant shift from previous approaches to translation. For earlier models, translating was defined as an attempt to produce the closest possible equivalence to the source text, while the target-culture conditions were seen as mere obstacles to this process. On the contrary, according to Koller, the very concept of equivalence is jointly defined by the source and the target contexts, and thereby translation ceases to be a servile and essentially imperfect reproduction of the original. It is considered as "a communicative event" in its own right, as Baker has put it, "which is shaped by its own goals, pressures and context of production" (1996b: 175). By the same move translation becomes relativised. Its meaning is not merely grounded on the idea of faithful transfer, but on the supposition that 'faithfulness' can mean different things in different contexts, that the success of translation production relies as much on the understanding of the source text and culture as on the adherence to principles, norms and goals set up within the translator's immediate historical context.

This transformation should not, however, be taken to entail the complete dissociation of translation from a given source text. To say that translation is shaped by its own goals and context never meant in this framework that translation is *exclusively* shaped by the target-culture conceptions, that it should abandon any attempt to achieve a kind of 'resemblance', a degree of equivalence to the original. From the point of view of prescriptive, applied translation studies[12] such a move is neither feasible nor perhaps fruitful, since the very idea of equivalence provides the means for determining what translation 'is', in opposition to other forms of rewriting, and thus how theory should teach it. Koller describes translation as bound by a double linkage: by its link to the source text and by its link to the communicative conditions of the target context. "This double linkage" he suggests "is central in defining (and this means in particular: differentiating) the equivalence relation" and simultaneously necessary for the task of applied translation studies: the attempt to identify "translation

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seems to me to maintain the idea of equivalence, even if the latter is defined in terms of communicative conditions and processes.

[12] The term is used on the basis of Holmes' categories of 'descriptive', 'theoretical' and 'applied' translation research (1972[1]; 1988:78-79).

difficulties" or "problems" and propose possible solutions in a didactic context (1995: 197, 200-201) – propose in other words how these problems can be solved by a particularised definition of translation correctness.

There is no doubt that this postulate is necessary for any attempt to teach translation, any discipline which seeks to direct translators on how best to achieve the results required from them in various professional contexts. Evocations of a concept of equivalence cannot be excluded from the pedagogic branch of translation studies without simultaneously cancelling its nature and purpose. For so long as one's aim is the teaching of translation, one cannot avoid proposing a notion of 'correctness', which is already implied in the teaching of foreign languages, let alone the delineation of rules for translation practice. What is important to consider, however, at the moment we admit this necessity, is the usefulness of this tool outside the translation classroom, that is to say, in attempts to examine the role and status of translation in various historical contexts, within which conceptions of 'equivalence' and definitions of translation practice have been different to our own. In other words can a prescriptive model be fruitfully employed in a study which does not aim at training translators, but at investigating what were the meaning and function of translations in history?

The answer given to this question by the descriptive-historical branch of translation research was generally a negative one. Conceptions of equivalence which maintain an evocation of correctness based on the source text or context were rejected as unable to contribute to the understanding of what translation has been for various historical communities. From this point of view, equivalence was seen as a "functional" and "relational" concept, whose meaning, as Gideon Toury pointed out in his seminal work *In Search of a Theory of Translation*, is exclusively related to conceptions of translation propriety that develop in the target society. Translation was thereby redefined as any utterance which is assumed to be a translation within a given sociocultural community, irrespectively of its actual – or what we consider as actual – relation to the source text (1980: 43).

2.2 Towards a Model for Historical Research

The development of a descriptive approach to translation, which was introduced as a "new paradigm" in the field (Hermans 1985a: 7), was inextricably related to the Leuven conference mentioned above, followed by two other conferences held in Tel Aviv in 1978 and in Antwerp in 1980,[13] as well as the research of a relatively small group of scholars who have been

[13] The proceedings of the second conference were published in the journal *Poetics Today* (1981: 2.4) edited by Itamar Even-Zohar and Toury and of the third in the Journal *Dispositio* (1982: 7. 19-21). This information is taken from Hermans 1999: 12.

working on translation since the seventies. The main hypothesis which informed this perspective is that the meaning of translation cannot be defined as an *a priori*, but should be discovered through a process of historical description, which is the only means for examining what translation has been in different cultural contexts. This idea is clearly articulated by Toury's assertion that

> ... a 'translation' will be taken to be any target-language utterance which is presented or regarded as such within the target culture, on whatever grounds (1985: 20).

Toury subsequently proposed the term 'assumed translation' in order to denote this concept (1995a). By this move the descriptive paradigm dissociated itself from attempts to define what translation should be. It proposed instead that translation studies should develop an empirical approach to its object, a method of analysis that should "refrain from value judgements in selecting subject matter or in presenting findings, and/or refuse to draw any conclusions in the form of recommendations for 'proper' behaviour" (Toury 1995:2). This postulate, which was subsequently developed and qualified by both Toury and others, articulated a necessary presupposition of historical translation research, which also constitutes a fundamental assumption of the present thesis: that in order to understand the production and function of translations in history one cannot rely on a strictly delineated definition, by which these translations should be appraised, but should rather proceed by examining "what translation has proved to be in reality" (ibid.: 32) and under which historical conditions conceptions and practices of translation have come into being. What this supposition implies, in terms of the present thesis, is that my subsequent analysis of translations will neither be concerned with an assessment of these works in terms of their faithfulness or equivalence to their originals nor will it seek to suggest how best these originals could have been translated into English. For the question that informs my research is not whether translations of 'democracy' measure up to an ideal of translation propriety, but how these translations formed such an ideal in their specific historical context, how they produced a rewriting[14] of their originals that became to be seen as a faithful translation of the Greek concept of 'democracy' in the framework of nineteenth-century British society.

This statement requires immediate qualification. To say that my work will refrain from prescriptive definitions of its object and will seek to employ instead a 'descriptive' and 'historical' approach may initially appear to imply that translations of 'democracy' will be considered as totally independent from the originals, that they will be examined as texts rather than translations, which bore no semantic or cultural relation to the writings that constituted their sources. This idea has, indeed, been suggested by a significant number of translation

theorists as the immediate and inescapable logical consequence of the disengagement of translation research from the notions of 'faithfulness' and 'equivalence'. Venuti for example has argued that the recognition of the point that translation is never quite 'faithful', it never establishes an identity and it can never be a transparent representation "releases translation from its subordination to the foreign text and makes possible the development of a hermeneutic that *reads the translation as a text in its own right*, as a weave of connotations, allusions, and discourses specific to the target-language culture" (1992a: 8, my italics).[15] Drawing on Venuti's suggestion, Rosemary Arrojo takes this argument further, and maintains that the translator's inevitable visibility implies the identification of authorial and translational task, to the extent that we are justified in dismissing any distinction between authors, translators, interpreters and readers alike (1997: 28, 30).

To be sure, such an approach is, of course, feasible. There is ostensibly no reason why we should not be able to collect a number of translations – say, English translations of Greek literature during the nineteenth century – and examine how these texts were shaped, what were their historical meaning and reference, whether their form adhered to or deviated from dominant forms of non-translated literature, whether they expressed conservative or progressive tendencies in the target community, or whatever one may choose to investigate. Yet, the moment we decide to collect *translations*, rather than any other category of texts – say, drama or poetry, both translated and original – we obviously assume and suggest that the texts put under the specific category 'translation' have something in common, they share at least one feature (even if this is the fact that they are conceived as translations) which is somehow peculiar to them and cannot be viewed as the distinctive feature of other cultural products of the target community. For if there is nothing distinctive in these texts, either in the beliefs of the group which initially created them and read them or in our own historical hypotheses, there is absolutely no reason why we should decide to gather them together, *under one name*, and examine them as if they were a group. There is certainly nothing essential, in a metaphysical sense of the term, that is shared by these texts, nothing which would distinguish them from non-translations in all times and places. Yet, the very existence of our collection and the name we give to it – "examination of *translations* of Greek texts into English" – is both a testimony and an endorsement of a (degree of) identity, a unity whose truth has been

[14] On the use of the term 'rewriting' see Lefevere 1992.

[15] It is important to emphasise that after the publication of the edition *Rethinking Translation* (1992), from which this extract is taken, Venuti's work indicates a shift from this position, by showing a specific interest in the way the original as a "foreign" text is rewritten in a context of the target-culture's (domestic) systems of values, beliefs and discourses. Cf. Venuti 1995; 1998; 2000. This turn, as Bassnett has pointed out (in a private conversation) can be fruitfully examined as an attempt to bring into Translation Studies the theoretical problematic of contemporary critical discourses of postcolonial, poststructuralist and postmarxist thinking.

institutionally and socially established before us and which is indeed reinforced by our concrete acts of choosing and naming.

This unity, as Toury has pointed out, derives, in the case of translation, from the presumed distinction between original and translated texts as well as the presumption of some kind of relationship between them.[16] This does not mean that there exists no authorial presence in the translator's voice or that originals are not subjected to interpretive readings. I am merely arguing that the categories 'original' and 'translation' have been constituted in our culture – and many others – as separate ones, and hence have produced a number of real and objective distinctions, as well as a number of real and objective interrelations between source and target text, even if these can only be discerned in this culture's self-identification and not in the 'reality' of the texts themselves. Furthermore, I am arguing that while these relations cannot be *a priori* defined or restricted in an essentialist way, their assumption is a *sine qua non* presupposition of the study of translations *as* translations and a *sine qua non* presupposition of an academic discourse which calls itself *Translation Studies*.

This hypothesis stands, I think, in accordance with Toury's definition of the assumed translation. Toury has admittedly argued that translations should be "*regarded as facts of the culture which hosts them*, with the concomitant assumption that whatever their function and identity, these are determined within that same culture and reflect its own constellation." (1995a:136. Cf. Toury 1980: 16; 1985: 19). Yet he perceptively described this assumed translation in terms of a cluster of three interconnected postulates: a) a source text postulate; b) a transfer postulate; and c) a relationship postulate. Translation was therefore specifically defined as

> any target-culture text for which there are reasons to tentatively posit the existence of another text, in another culture and language, from which it was presumably derived by transfer operations and to which it is now tied by certain relationships, some of which may be regarded - within that culture - as necessary and/or sufficient. (1995a: 145)

Toury has clarified that the crucial aspect of this definition is not the existence of the source text as such, nor the actual degree of identity (if any) of translation with that text, but the presumption that the process whereby "translation came into being involved the transference from the assumed source text of certain features that the two now share"; a presumption which then produces a relationship postulate, as it "implies that there are accountable relationships which tie it [translation] to its assumed original" (ibid.: 144). The above definition of the assumed translation does not allow us to ignore the source text (or, more accurately, the ways

the source text exists in target-culture assumptions), but only refutes the acceptance of an *a priori* and one-dimensional relationship of faithfulness or equivalence between the translation and the original. It further draws attention to the establishment of a number of accountable relations between the two texts, which can then be grasped as the expressions of beliefs of the target culture as to what constitutes the necessary and/or sufficient conditions for the naming of a text as a translation. If no relationship can be determined, we must conclude that the hypothetical community in question has not developed a concept or practice of translation. We are therefore not justified in studying texts as translations. If the target community does not conceive any relationship of the kind, though we can discern one, we must conclude that this community does not have a concept of translation that is similar to ours. It is nevertheless engaged in a cultural practice which we have reasons to classify as translation. And finally, if the target community defines a set of such relationships, while we can see none, we must conclude that our conception of translation is different to the one expressed in this community, and proceed to understand the thought-mode and cultural traits that form and sustain this different conception. In all these cases, a distinction as well as a relationship between the source and target text are presupposed and have to be self-critically determined. For their absence either relegates historical translation research to silence – an admittedly consistent choice, if we decide to make it – or expands it so much that it makes it identical with the entirety of contemporary human sciences – a choice which implies that translation would actually mean nothing, precisely because it is taken to mean everything.

But there is a final, and perhaps the most important, objection to my argument, which would point out that a choice of examining translations as unbound by the original texts is self-consciously subversive of established thought-modes. It does not seek to conform to existing institutional and conceptual frameworks, but acts against them and aims to fragment and dismantle dominant conceptions of translation, and together with them the social and ideological world that sustains them. It could then be argued that the non-identity, the fundamental heterogeneity of both translation, original writings and the cultures which produce them, as Venuti suggests, is already a reality, our irreducibly fragmented reality, which is obscured by the discourses of faithfulness and transparency, because it is threatening to the *status quo* both culturally and politically. For the binary opposition between 'original' and 'translation', which makes translation appear invisible and subordinate to a presumably 'coherent' authorial writing, acts to conceal the fact that

[16] The existence of pseudotranslations, as has been defined by Toury (1980; 1995), does not invalidate this argument, since in this case also, readers suppose a relation between the translation and an original, even if the latter had never actually existed.

> neither the foreign text nor the translation is an original semantic unity; both are derivative and heterogeneous, consisting of diverse linguistic and cultural materials which destabilize the work of signification, making meaning plural and differential, exceeding and possibly conflicting with the intentions of the foreign writer and the translator (Venuti 1992a: 7).

Hereby emerges the political significance of any attempt to disrupt the relation between translation and source text: an emphasis on the non-transparency, the visibility of the translator would be, in Venuti's view, a political gesture *par excellence*; an attempt to question the nationalist and homogenising ideology implied in the marginal status of translation in contemporary institutions and force a revaluation of pedagogical practices and disciplinary divisions that derive from this status (ibid.: 6-7, 9-10; 1998: 1-13)

This is, indeed, a compelling position, since it does not merely draw our attention to the totalising function of a concept, but also expresses a political commitment and a utopian vision, in which it finds its justification and purpose. For what Venuti's thesis illuminates is that conceptions of translation and authorship do not develop as a merely literary or cultural concern which is removed from the social conditions of its making, but emerge as an articulation and a means of sustaining these conditions: institutional hierarchies, national formations, differences in wages and social position, inequality of cultural status and power, intellectual property rights, the role of the market in the formation of textual production and so on. What is, however, conspicuously absent from it is a self-reflexive move, an attempt to investigate how this social world, which has produced the master-slave relationship between original and translation, has also brought into being the reality of cultural fragmentation and heterogeneity, and thereby the theorisation of this reality. It thus fails to ask whether the glorification of cultural disparity, which it proposes as a utopian alternative, could be seen from a different perspective as a constitutive element of contemporary institutional structures, an outcome and reinforcement of what Fredric Jameson has perspicaciously described as the cultural logic of late capitalist societies (1991), whose laws are more nourished and sustained by our fragmented social identities, rather than being politically threatened by them.

This absence of self-reflexive thought does not only provoke an uncritical evocation of a re-conceptualisation of translation, which appears able to be developed *per se*, while social conditions and political structures which sustain it remain static and stable; it further entails an inability to recognise how the alternative it brings to light, which is at one and the same time seen in the present and desired as a future ideal, is far from being incompatible with these conditions. It is, indeed, far from being alien to a tradition which has never denounced its interest in embracing disparate cultural expressions under its own names, from the nomination of Queen Victoria Empress of India to the presence of gay culture in today's high-fashion

magazines in London. We can, of course, legitimately describe this tradition as already and irreducibly dismantled. We can call into question what translation claims to be and challenge its assumed unity. We can also describe the marginality of translation as illusory and mystifying, a false conception formed in the context of a dominant language, social organisation and political institutions. We may then choose to disrupt this dominance by emphasising the fragmentation of all forms of speaking and writing, by revealing the incoherence and instability at the heart of what, in our world, passes as coherent and stable. We may become engaged in this political enterprise which illuminates the non-inter-relatedness of translated texts, the lack of anything which may unite them and the lack of anything that may distinguish them from so-called original writings. We may still continue to name this internally disrupted aggregation of texts 'translations'. Yet we also need to turn to our social and cultural history, and thus to the description of 'assumed' translations, in order to ask whether the tradition of thought we set out to criticise has already constituted a space for our criticism within itself, whether assumptions of translation and authorship manifested in it were reduced to an enforcement of essentialist ideals of homogeneity or whether they developed to be complicit with a celebration of cultural difference within which our own discourse is now embedded. We need to ask whether relations of domination and power in this tradition have been merely justified by evoking their internal coherence, by resting on a unified originating subject – the subject that is embodied in the idea of the author – or whether their force lay precisely in a paradoxical duality which created subjectivity at the very moment the unity of the subject was dispelled, totally fragmented, thus becoming deprived of a unified and socially effective dissenting voice. It is from this point of view that the present study will seek to describe and examine the history of assumed distinctions and assumed relations between translations and source texts: on the grounds that there is no real distance between an idealistic assertion of social unity and homogeneity and a glorification of cultural difference, so long as both are articulated as hypostasised conditions of human communities *per se*, rather than the expression of specific and accountable historical and social processes.

Now having argued the priority of a descriptive-historical method for the present thesis, it is important to turn to the varied meanings and processes of translation description, and their implications for the definition of my object. Such an attempt, which touches upon methods of historical research, brings us to the interface between Translation Studies and those interlocutors which stand at the 'outer' limits of the field.

2.3 The Uncertainties of Description

The first step in an historical approach to translation would be, as was argued, to seek to read translation and metatranslation discourses of a particular time and place in order to determine what was meant by the term and practice of translation in the context in question. Yet this process, as we have learned from the hermeneutic tradition, is far from being straightforward and thus far from 'merely' descriptive. As Hans-Georg Gadamer points out, the medium through which such reading takes place, the subject's own language, is not a neutral means that can transcribe past texts and cultural conceptions, but embodies a range of contemporary presuppositions and predilections, 'prejudices' that belong to our own thought and history, and preclude in advance an immediate access to our object of study. This thesis, which was mainly developed by Gadamer in *Truth and Method* (1960[1]; 1989), did not seek to evoke a conventional notion of 'prejudices' that defines them as impediments, constraints to an objective view of the text. According to Gadamer, the very 'objectivity' of this view is an inherently perspectivist one, since our potential for historical understanding does not imply the elimination, but the use of our 'prejudices'. For it is only through them that a distant text and a distant culture's horizon of meaning can make any sense to us. 'Prejudiced' understanding, interpretation, Gadamer suggests, does not entail a distortion of knowledge; it shapes the only possible knowledge of meanings and cultures (1960[1];1989: 277-306).

The supposition that our understanding of other cultures is contingent and relative to the conceptual potential and cultural tradition of its own historical production has been largely influential for contemporary thought and has implied the employment of a metaphorical conception of translation as a theoretical alternative to the idea of faithful description and representation. Within the framework of what has been aptly called an 'interpretive turn'[17] manifested in philosophical, historical and social research Clifford Geertz described anthropological writings as "interpretations" of cultures, "fictions" not in the sense that they are imaginative thought experiments, but in the sense that they are "something made", "fashioned" within the cultural structures of the target community (1973[1]; 1993:15). Starting from a more politicised theoretical perspective James Clifford not only drew attention to the inherently translational character of disciplines such as ethnography and anthropology, but also emphasised the transient, socially constructed truthfulness of their interpretive meaning, whose objectivist claims are in the full sense of the word ideological and "are made possible by powerful 'lies' of exclusion and rhetoric" (1988:38-44; 1986:7). If such works problematised traditional conceptions of transparency and scientific neutrality, by arguing

both theoretically and through empirical studies that 'writing' about other cultures necessarily takes place from a cultural and social perspective and, if we follow Clifford's thought, on behalf of a political one, a parallel discussion taking place at the interface between philosophy, literary theory and cultural studies employed the notion of interpretation in order to challenge the univocality of textual and more particularly literary meaning. Already anticipated by Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of 'heteroglossia' (1934-35[1]; 1981: 259-422), which pointed out the plurality of social voices inscribed in the (literary) text, the idea that meaning cannot be reduced either to the individual intentions of its author or to the linguistic codes of a one-dimensional and static text has been argued by theorists as diverse in their methodological positions as Fredric Jameson,[18] Stanley Fish,[19] and Jacques Derrida.[20] Although it is not the intention of this work to impose a false unity among theoretical agendas ranging from Marxism to hermeneutics and poststructuralism, it is significant to emphasise that what these writers suggested, if only as an initial theoretical presupposition, is a negative postulate: that meaning cannot be determinatively and finally defined, but exceeds definitions by being constantly reinterpreted and reconstructed within the diversified conceptual potential of its receiving communities.

A position as radical as this did more than question empiricist conceptions of historical representation. It problematised at the same time a line of thought that goes back to traditional hermeneutic theories, informed as much by Friedrich Schleiermacher's Romantic subjectivism as by Wilhelm Dilthey's historicism. The idea of empathetic understanding of the authorial genius, which was at work in Schleiermacher's conviction that hermeneutics should aim to understand an author better than he understood himself (Ricoeur 1981[1]; 1995: 46-47) evoked as the task of interpretive analysis the discovery of a subjectivity which is no longer seen either as coherent or as creative as it used to be. Likewise Dilthey's attempt to situate hermeneutics in history and see the coherence of the text as the articulation of an equally coherent lifeworld (Ricoeur 1981; 1995: 48-53) has been challenged by a tradition of thought, which owes as much to poststructuralism as it does to Marxism, and reads both texts and historical worlds as constituted by fissures and breaks, by textual and concomitantly social articulations of contradictions, tensions and inconsistencies. Most significantly, the idea of

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[17] On the term see the edition of Hiley, Bohman and Shusterman *The Interpretive Turn. Philosophy, Science, Culture* (1991).

[18] See the first chapter of the *Political Unconscious* entitled "On Interpretation" (1981:17-102)

[19] See especially Fish's concept of 'interpretive communities' in his *Is There a Text in the Class? The Authority of Interpretive Communities* (1980).

[20] Derrida employs the concept of 'translation' in a complex way, whose detailed analysis lies beyond the aims of this introduction, but will be touched upon in the development of my thesis. Suffice to say at the moment that

hermeneutic fidelity, which was intended to provide the human sciences with an interpretive method that would claim equal authority and validity with the explanatory methods of natural sciences, was deemed to be as idealist as its Cartesian predecessors. The valorisation of a static conception of meaning inscribed in the notion of historical truthfulness, the assertion of the social and political neutrality of cultural languages, and the prioritisation of a universalised tradition of world-conceptions as both the presupposition and the ultimate end of interpretive processes, became the focus of a rigorous critique, inspired by the work of French and American poststructuralism, Marxism and postmarxism, feminist and postcolonial theorists, who found a minimum consensus in the conviction that interpretations of texts and readings of history cannot merely be viewed as accurate or inaccurate representations, as faithful or unfaithful translations.

While the emergence of Translation Studies in the seventies was marked by a similar problematic regarding the nature of translation, and several scholars in the field were eager to develop an interdisciplinary dialogue,[21] it was only recently that the notions of 'description' and 'interpretation' of translation were actually called into question in the context of translation theory. During the seventies and the eighties the aim of translation research was predominantly formulated along the lines given by Holmes' seminal paper "The Name and Nature of Translation Studies":[22]

> As a field of pure research - that is to say, research pursued for its own sake, quite apart from any direct practical application outside its own terrain- translation studies has two main objectives: (1) To describe the phenomena of translating and translation(s) as they manifest

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translation, as Andrew Benjamin has pointed out, plays a crucial role in Derrida's view of philosophical understanding and is considered as the enactment of the possibility and practice of philosophy (1989:1).

[21] There are several examples of works which introduced into the field of translation studies a methodological and theoretical problematic that had been developed in other disciplines. One of the first attempts to explore such a potential was made by a writer whose entire contribution to the field of translation research drew on a fruitful oscillation between translation studies, literary and cultural theory, namely André Lefevere. In one of his first publications, an article entitled "Translation: The Focus and Growth of Literary Knowledge", Lefevere was directly engaged with traditional hermeneutic models for the understanding of translation, which he sought to prove as scientifically, theoretically and methodologically unfruitful for translation research (1978a: 9, 15-25). Lefevere did not only consider Translation Studies as the receiver of theoretical contemplation that develops outside the field. He also envisaged the possibility of a mutual interaction and dialogue between Translation Studies, literary, linguistic and cultural theories, and believed that a theory of translation elaborated on non-prescriptive grounds could also be of use to other disciplines (1978). In the following decades a wide number of theorists, including Bassnett (1993; 1998a), Hermans (1996; 1999a; 1999b), José Lambert and Clem Robyns (forthcoming), Tejaswini Niranjana (1992) and Venuti (1998), have followed similar directions and sought to examine translation from perspectives that were given by philosophical, historical and literary thought on interpretation.

[22] "The Name and Nature of Translation Studies" is an expanded version of a paper presented in the Translation Section of the Third International Congress of Applied Linguistics, held in Copenhagen, 21-26 August 1972. It was first issued in the APPTS series of the Translation Studies Section, Department of General Literary Studies, University of Amsterdam, 1972. The version included in the 1988 edition which I am using follows its second prepublication form (1975).

> themselves in the world of experience, and (2) to establish general principles by means of which these phenomena can be explained and *predicted* (1972[1]; 1988: 71).

If we provisionally postpone a discussion of the second of these aims, and the ways these two objectives were interrelated, we can immediately observe the influence of Holmes' viewpoint on Toury's already mentioned hypothesis that the 'assumed translation' is what translation proves to be in reality, and therefore what it may be expected to be in specifiable social conditions (1995: 32). What this suggestion presupposes is the transparency of the means of historical description: contemporary theory. For, as Toury has emphasised, while "well-performed studies *always* bear on their underlying theories" the truth-value of any theoretical hypothesis can only be established against the results of empirical research; as it is only the latter that can enable the verification, refutation or modification of theoretical hypotheses (1995: 15-16).

Such evocations of a 'reality' of translations, which is seen as accessible through empirical studies, became central in the ways Translation Studies formed a self-descriptive discourse and presented itself as a new scientific model. This thesis brought into being a paradoxical ambivalence in the context of descriptive translation research. On the one hand, the descriptive paradigm challenged both the notion of empathetic understanding of linguistic equivalence and the dissociation of translation production from the social structures and cultural norms of the target community. What was emphasised instead was the need to examine translation as the product of multiple and conflicting historical forces – personal, cultural, social, political – which should not be reduced to the determining role of the original, but should be seen as produced by the historical conditions, norms and necessities that develop in the context of the target culture. On the other hand, it was suggested that the engagement with an enterprise of rewriting that shares many features with the process of translation, namely the understanding and historical interpretation of past texts, works under no contemporary constraints or goals, follows no norms, but can be a faithful and accurate description of its source-object: translation in history.

The endorsement of epistemological realism underlying this statement, that is to say the belief that statements possess a truth-value which is not contingent on our means of knowing it but established in virtue of a reality existing independently of us (Dummett, 1978: 146), silenced, paradoxically, precisely what it aspired to reveal: the social and cultural contingency of any conception of translation. For how could one argue that all forms of translation are historically conditioned and assert at the same time that a contemporary rewriting of translation history occupies an Archimedean viewpoint, a cultural and political vacuum from which it merely reports what translations said or did? As was soon felt by an

important number of translation theorists since the early nineties, the two claims were hardly reconcilable. The rejection of essentialist conceptions of translation stood so evidently at odds with an assumed neutrality of translation descriptions that it necessitated the rethinking and revaluation of the latter. This process found substantial theoretical support in the wider dispute about interpretive fidelity and representation that was simultaneously taking place in the human and social sciences.

Among the first systematic attempts to develop such a problematic and articulate a self-reflexive discourse in translation theory appears in a number of articles and other works written by Hermans since 1995. Hermans focused on the epistemological fallacies entailed by evocations of empiricism in translation research and suggested a conception of translation descriptions as interpretive acts, which are neither neutral nor transparent, but constitute part of a broader discursive framework that is entangled in the social, cultural and institutional conditions of its own historical context (1996: 47-48; Cf. 1995; 1997 16-20; 1999a: 65-69; 1999: 144-150). Hermans' work employed the hermeneutic supposition that understanding is only possible through a certain conceptual framework into which we 'translate' other cultural conceptions, in order to argue that this process is not simply a matter of conceptual fidelity or infidelity – whether we can perform accurate or inaccurate interpretations – but a predominantly cultural and social issue. For these conceptions, he maintained, articulate historically conditioned beliefs and ideas which are somewhat imposed on the object-culture, in the sense that the language of this culture is made comprehensible for us only when it is transcribed into our own language, when it is made commensurable to our own definitions of translation, and therefore the beliefs and values that are inscribed in them. This process, according to Hermans, is entangled in a network of asymmetrical power relations in two ways. On the one hand an historiographic account of translations shapes an image of the object-culture which is made to conform to certain social, ethical and political standards by which the 'culture-object' is re-figured as 'Other' and subsequently appraised (1999a: 68). On the other hand the translation researcher assumes a position, a 'social persona' within her own social and cultural context, thereby locating her work in a framework of pre-existing structures, institutions and power relations. Thus, the study of translations, like translation itself, becomes a social practice which, far from being socially innocent and purely scientific, is multiply determined by the historical conditions of its making (1996: 48).

What this recognition necessitates, in Hermans' view, is the development of self-critical and reflexive thought, which would avoid the pitfalls of empiricism and acknowledge

its own 'biases', its inescapable dependence on an historical context within which it is produced and to which, in turn, it contributes:

> When we engage in historical and cross-cultural studies on translation, we translate other people's concepts and practices of translation on the basis of our own, historical, concept of translation, including its normative aspect and the values it secures. We have no other choice. But having become conscious of the problem inherent in our descriptions we can devise strategies that acknowledge as much. That ought to be part of the ethos of the discipline (1999a: 68-69).

This conclusion is, I think, no less puzzling than it is illuminating. For if, as it is argued, thought's embeddedness in history does not entirely preclude the possibility of self-understanding and criticism, if the limits imposed on interpretation are at least flexible enough to permit a consciousness of the problem at stake – however partial and limited – then one may legitimately ask why would such consciousness confine itself to 'acknowledging as much' rather than seeking to transform itself and the world that brings it into being? To be sure, when discussed in terms of epistemology, the relativisation of historiographic certainty implied in the above hypothesis is hardly disputable – at least not from a position that seeks to historicise itself as much as it recognises the historical nature of its object. Yet so long as this thesis is phrased in social and political terms, that is to say, so long as interpretation is not merely described as a problem of cognition and historical accuracy, but as a discourse that is made possible within particular social structures and relations, does not this politicised consciousness concomitantly create social and political obligations? And do not these obligations remain essentially unfulfilled by merely recognising the relativity of one's theoretical position? If, in other words, a self-critical understanding of translation-description is not reduced to a mere dilemma regarding our faithfulness or unfaithfulness to the past, but is seen as a predominantly social phenomenon that cannot be separated from its institutional and political context, then I cannot see how this understanding can be actualised as devoid of the responsibility for choice and judgement, how it can abandon the obligation to appraise and evaluate its social bonds and contribution, while continuing to ascertain a self-critical viewpoint.

A way of addressing this issue has been suggested by Venuti, who sought to articulate a critique of what he names as the "scientific model" in translation research by emphasising the inevitability of judgement in the development of historical and cultural theory. Venuti takes as his starting point Toury's thesis that translation research should seek to establish itself as an empirical science and thus refrain from value judgements. In Venuti's view this claim can be seen today "as theoretically naïve or perhaps disingenuous" on the grounds that

"judgements cannot be avoided in this or any other cultural theory." For even "at the level of devising and executing a research project", he argues, a scholarly interpretation will be laden with the values and interests of its particular situation (1998: 27-28). Hence in the case of descriptive translation research Venuti sees the claims to objectivity as a repression of more concrete disciplinary interests, namely the attempt to "install translation studies in academic institutions", develop a theory that would "prevail over others that are not scientific" and become "implicated in academic empire-building" insofar as descriptive studies take its "audience to be scholars, not translators" (1998: 28). At a broader level, as Venuti points out, what is not recognised by Toury's hypothesis is that the insistence on value-free translation studies prevents the discipline from considering its position in relation to the hierarchy of values that define its historical context at large, and from examining the cultural and social impact translation research may have.[23] For so long as conceptions of translation and translation norms "include a diverse range of domestic values, beliefs, and social representations which carry ideological force in serving the interests of specific groups" then 'descriptions' of translation, according to Venuti, ought to adopt a critical stance towards their object, be able to assess its ideological and political significance and simultaneously contribute to the self-critical shaping of their present (1998: 29).

What it is important to maintain from this critique is that historical consciousness is also a political consciousness and thereby obliged to recognise its historicity and simultaneously make choices, that is to say, be able to prioritise one form of history and politics instead of another. Yet this is far from being a conclusion to this discussion. For the question that immediately arises from such a thesis is: on which grounds can one select, judge, criticise and propose alternatives? If our consciousness of history can only be a relativised and historically contingent consciousness, as both Venuti and Hermans point out, that is, a consciousness which has no other standards for judgement apart from world-perspectives, how can we choose and construct a particular position against those our choice necessarily rejects and marginalizes? On which basis can we argue, in our case, that a range of readings and translations of 'democracy' was authoritarian and oppressive, while appraising another as fostering the ideals of human solidarity, equality and responsibility – a judgement that has to assume in advance the value and desirability of a particular form of society and politics, thus excluding alternatives? In other words, is it possible to develop a politically constructive critique of translation (among other cultural phenomena) without claiming some validity for

[23] Tejaswini Niranjana develops a similar criticism of descriptions of Translation Studies as an 'empirical science", arguing that such a claim cannot but repress conditions of domination and power differentials that inform the relations between languages (1992: 59-60)

our thought, without evoking a certainty which presumably betrays, by its very articulation, the aims it seeks to serve?

Venuti's response to this question seems to be a negative one. In his view any attempt to base the validity of one's position on a scale that may extend beyond its original, relative limits in a cultural group or consciousness is unavoidably an imposition on others, an enforcement of a false homogeneity that marginalizes and oppresses 'otherness', no matter whether this process takes place at the level of theory, as a claim to scientificity, or at the level of translation practice. On these grounds, he suggests that an ethics of translation should take as its "ideal the recognition of cultural difference": it should criticise the narcissistic dismissal of 'foreign' and minority values (the two terms are somewhat confusingly put together in Venuti's work); "promote cultural innovation and change"; recognise cultural particularity and alterity; and resist an ethics of sameness that hews to dominant domestic values and consolidates existing institutions and authorities (1998: 187-188).

This seems to me a self-defeating position, at least when discussed in political terms. 'Change' and 'innovation' cannot themselves constitute an ethical imperative, since they could lead as easily to fascism as to a "democratic agenda" which Venuti takes to be the aim of a politicised critique (1998: 10). Neither can the opposition between the domestic and the foreign form the basis of such a critique, not least because a good number of openly oppressive cultures in human history have (fortunately) been foreign to others. That is to say, one may easily suggest foreignisation as a means for the radicalisation of a 'domestic' politics, when we translate postcolonial writings into English, but could the same point be argued for a possible translation of *Mein Kampf* into a liberal-democratic context? What I want to emphasise by this example is not that postcolonial texts are necessarily politically progressive and radical or that there is an insurmountable distance between liberal democracies and the historical development of fascism in Europe, but that the opposition 'domestic' vs. 'foreign' is so abstracted from the historical meanings 'ethics', 'morality', 'justice' and 'politics' have acquired in our societies that it is not only in danger of becoming an empty theoretical evocation that unavoidably fails to explain how power and domination takes form in concrete historical situations; it is also employable by such a diversity of political positions that one becomes immediately sceptical regarding its value as a yardstick for historical judgement and choice.

Venuti's evocation of minority and dissenting cultures is more complex, but does not avoid falling into a similar mode of reasoning. For while it perceptively takes as its object of critique the dominant discourse of the liberal bourgeois societies, in which it is located, it

mistakenly assumes that any minority within these societies articulates a desirable political ideal, merely by virtue of its position as minor and marginal. Yet while this thesis may demonstrate the ethical value of, say, ethnic voices seeking social recognition, it is highly questionable whether it can bestow a similar value on a minor group of religious fundamentalists demanding the prosecution for homicide of all women who have abortions.[24] The following chapters of this thesis will provide a further example. As we shall examine, positive appraisals of classical democracy emerged in the context of late eighteenth-century Europe as a minoritized voice, positioned against a thought-mode that saw equality as identified with anarchy. Yet this originally minor discourse acted to sustain a social system that hardly denied its mission to maintain and impose relations of domination and human oppression. To be sure, this role could not have been attained unless this new discourse had managed, progressively, to extend and secure its canonicity; but still it would be difficult to argue that the fundamental reason behind the oppressive aspects of Western democracies was their appeal to majorities.

On the contrary, one can hardly reduce the entire body of canonical writings of the Western tradition to an unequivocal reinforcement of relations of domination that defined the politics of this tradition. Terry Eagleton has succinctly developed this point by seeking to account for the values of canonical literature, which cannot be equated with a support of the political establishment:

> Homer was not a liberal humanist, Virgil did not champion bourgeois values, Shakespeare put in a good word for radical egalitarianism, Samuel Johnson cheered on popular insurrection in the Caribbean, Flaubert despised the middle classes and Tolstoy had no time for private property (2000: 52).

This is not to say that the canon of Western literature and culture was politically innocent or generally progressive, but to suggest that this canon, part of which consisted of ancient Greek literature, and in particular ancient Greek literature in translations, was culturally multilayered and politically ambiguous. It thus lent itself to the justification of both 'moral' and 'immoral' intentions: it became the repository of ideals of equality and freedom at the very moment it was used to sustain a system of social hierarchies, domination and power differentials. It was precisely this ambiguity, as will be discussed in the next chapters, that has created a potential for self-criticism and evaluation, a capacity to view this world and seek, simultaneously, to

[24] This position has been argued on several occasions by Terry Eagleton, who draws attention to the pure formalism of the evocation of minority-cultures as a political or ethical ideal and points out that a number of 'minor' cultural forms cannot be approved simply because they are cultural forms, or because they are part of a rich diversity and heterogeneity of such forms (2000: 15).

disengage ourselves from its convictions, judge its social and cultural values, and pursue alternatives to them.

From this point of view, the object of the present thesis, namely the ways classical 'democracy' was understood and actualised in the Western tradition, and Britain in particular, since the late eighteenth century, is also its most fundamental presupposition. For this object, as I shall seek to argue, can provide a basis for the investigation of distinctions between historical 'truths' and 'lies', between the 'just' and the 'unjust', the 'right' and the 'wrong', in short a basis for a political questioning of our cultural history that has already been initiated within it, as a form of self-questioning and criticism. To be sure, this tradition did not give final answers to the above dilemmas. Instead it invited ahistorical and vulnerable certainties: either of scientific omnipotence or of the essential absence of knowledge potentials; either of conceptual universals or of conceptual incommensurability; either of cultural identity or of cultural difference; either of pure translatability or of untranslatability. Yet it also made clear – at least at its most revealing moments – that its inherent aporias cannot be separated from the institutional, social, and political forces which mark their historical appearances, that every time we treat our dilemmas as merely intellectual puzzles, we are already trapped within them, we speak from the position that was so aptly described by Samuel Weber' *Institution and Interpretation* as "the idea and ideal of knowledge" (1987: ix). It was precisely this thought-mode, which separates historical truth from our social world and our particular role within it, that was sustained as much as it was questioned by the translations of democracy during the nineteenth century.

3. Translation as a Political Issue

At the beginning of the nineties, Bassnett and Lefevere argued that the most significant outcome of the development of Translation Studies was to show that "translation, like all (re)writings is never innocent. There is always a context in which the translation takes place, always a history from which a text emerges and into which a text is transposed" (1990:11). This history, which manifests the manipulation, appropriation and domestication of source texts,[25] and necessitates that our thought on translation ceases to search for ideals of translation identity, but concentrates instead on 'gains and losses' (Bassnett 1980[1]:1991), 'difference' (Hermans 1999a), perhaps 'radical difference' between the translation and the source text (Venuti 1998; Godard 1990), is the object and ultimate framework of this study.

[25] For a further analysis of the terms used as descriptions of 'translation', see Bassnett and Lefevere (1990a), Hermans (1985), Lefevere (1992), Venuti (1995).

To describe translation as an historical phenomenon requires a further step: to seek to investigate how this phenomenon develops as an integral part of historical processes, how it is formed by social values, ideas, necessities, intentions, and how, in turn, it may affect the social context of which it is part. This thesis will seek to provide a twofold answer to this question. It will suggest that translation acquires a certain historical function both as a category (or concept) which defines what it means to translate in a certain context, and as a body of texts, which is posited within the broader discursive networks of the target society. While these two aspects of translation activity are obviously interrelated, they should also be distinguished from each other for a number of reasons. First, conceptions of translation and metatranslation discourses do not necessarily correspond to practices that develop in the same context. As Toury has suggested, such theoretical attempts to define what translation is or to prescribe norms of translation propriety constitute a category of discourse which is fundamentally different from the "primary" products of translation behaviour. This difference should not be understood in terms of a presumed incapacity of translators to follow rules or fulfil their explicitly expressed goals and intentions. Normative pronouncements and theoretical formulations of this kind, in Toury's view, are rather produced as expressions of beliefs and values, which neither determine nor describe translation practice. Instead they prescribe an ideal category of translation, which more often than not tends to lean toward propaganda and persuasion or reflect the writer's naïveté and lack of sufficient knowledge of actual translation behaviour (1995: 65-66). What is more, metatranslation discourses do not only consist of conceptions of translation in the conventional sense of the term, but also of metaphoric uses of translation, which do not address themselves to problems of practice, but to the meaning and implications of translation as regards processes of understanding and intercultural communication, definitions of the cultural and social identity of the target community, the relation of this identity to other cultures and so on. From this perspective, conceptions of translation will be treated as a relatively autonomous discourse, which does not affect practice in a direct and straightforward manner, but nevertheless participates in the formation of the broader social discourses through which translators conceive of themselves and their work, formulate assumed relations between translations and source texts, and set up the norms and goals of their practice.

The main hypothesis I shall seek to pursue in the next chapters is that an historical approach to translation entails the understanding of both conceptions of translation and translated texts as political phenomena. This is not merely to say that the work of translation theorists may be affected by their political creeds, or that translations may transform and

manipulate source texts due to political interests, or even that the translation of certain works – such as translations of 'democracy' – may have political implications. My use of the concept 'political' is both broader in the range of application, and stricter as regards its meaning. It is broader in the sense that it can be employed as a denominator of all intellectual and cultural products of a social community, be they literary texts, translations, scientific discourses, works of art and so on. In other words, the particular meaning of the word 'political' I seek to delineate is not compatible with a distinction between a range of (or aspects of) translations which may be considered as political and others which may not.[26] It rather refers to the embeddedness of translation discourses in organised societies, which enable the articulation of certain forms, networks of concepts, meanings and values, that are inscribed in translation choices, and act, at the same time, to sustain or question the social formation which brought them into being.

The phrase 'organised societies' is, in a sense, tautological, since there is no social unit which does not manifest a form of organisation. It may nevertheless be illuminating to provide a brief description of its meaning. The term is employed here to suggest that societies are not mere aggregations of individuals or groups. Instead, all social units develop institutional mechanisms by which they classify their members; advance specific modes by which they produce the intellectual, cultural and material goods that are necessary for their maintenance; construct educational and legal frameworks by which they assign the production of certain goods to specific people who are trained for this purpose; delimit the rights of each of their members to use these goods; and determine acceptable, permissible and forbidden forms of social conduct as well as apparatuses intended to enforce and maintain their organisation and structure.

A social formation can then function and reproduce itself insofar as social agents acquire a sense of identity through which they realise their distinct roles, participate in social processes and modes of production, understand differences between 'right' and 'wrong', 'just' and 'unjust', 'true' and 'untrue' that are meaningful in their community, and know what they are allowed or obliged to do, or not do. Personal and collective identities are articulated in language (among other semiotic systems), or, more accurately, in the particular uses of language in discourses: the relatively coherent practices by which a community, as Michel Foucault argues, systematically categorises and forms the objects of which it speaks, in ways that establish certain relations between these objects, while making other relations or objects inconceivable. The fundamental feature of discursive formations, in Foucault's view, does not

[26] This position, which draws on Jameson's thesis in *The Political Unconscious* (1981: 20), will be further

lie in their capacity to pick up an already given object and make it conceivable and communicable by merely relating it to a concept. Instead, discursive formations form these objects. That is to say, they determine a network of *relations* through which and in accordance with which communities are able to understand and speak of certain objects, name them, classify them, analyse them, reflect on and deal with them (1969[1]; 1972: 31-49).

Social identities are then articulated in order to be realised as given. What is more, they are articulated in ways that indicate their relation to the historical society which brought them into being. This means that while a certain range of these identities would be encountered in all social units (such as the identity of the persons or groups who take care of the younger members of a community), disparate social formations would give rise to corresponding discourses and modes by which people understand themselves and the social context in which they are situated. In classical Athens, for example, the members of the city can be generally classified into three main social categories, namely citizens, slaves and women, each of which had a specific social role, rights and obligations, as well as certain relationships to the others and to the social body as a whole. The discourses which articulated the notion of citizen, slave and woman, or the conceptions of rights, laws and justice in this context were connected to the specific historical conditions of classical Athens. Thus one cannot find direct equivalents to them in modern societies, in which slavery no longer exists, the category of citizen has been merged with that of the individual, while women constitute a social and cultural group which is different to its presumed equivalent in ancient Greece.

Translations and metatranslation discourses are then defined as political on the grounds that they express socially significant convictions and values, which codify the organisation of a society as well as the social experience of this organisation. This position should not, however, be taken to entail a one-directional causative process, in which discursively defined categories play a merely functional and secondary role – that is to say, they result from necessities (i.e. the necessity to produce certain kinds of identity) that exist in themselves independently of the words by which they are conceptualised. Historical social reality, it is argued, forms the condition for the production of discourses. Yet a condition is not to be defined as a given, a thing-in-itself. As Pierre Macherey has argued, a condition is not a cause in the empirical sense. It is the principle of rationality which makes a discourse, a cultural product, a literature, a translation – in short a work – accessible to thought. Thus, to know the conditions of a work, according to Macherey, is not to reduce its production to merely the growth of a seed which contains itself all its future possibilities, a genesis which is

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analysed in the second chapter of this thesis.

the reverse image of analysis. Instead, to know the conditions of a work "is to define the real process of its constitution, to show how it is composed from a real diversity of elements which give it substance"; elements which are to be understood as the products of history, but not outcomes of historical "fatality". For while the work does not come to being by chance, it does involve novelty; it is an act which mobilises the seemingly given situation which brought it into being. And it is this mobility, Macherey argues, which is inscribed in the very letter of a work, that makes it possible and from which the work emerges (1966[1];1978: 49). The translation work is therefore constructed by demarcating its irreducible difference from the reality which conditions its very production (the difference between discourse and the social real) and by simultaneously mobilising, transforming, modifying, (re)conceptualising this reality. But more than this, the nature of this work is realised at the very moment it becomes the object of knowledge *qua* discourse – and it is only in this capacity, which incorporates nothing different to it, that the whole historical truth of translation – a truth that is irreducible to language – can be reconstructed.

From this perspective, this thesis will initially discuss certain aspects of metatranslation discourses that developed in the context of modernity. These works, which were produced as much by translation theorists as by philosophers, will be found to have had a profound significance for the constitution of the ideals of autonomy, liberty and subjectivity that defined democratic thought during the nineteenth century. In this respect, the basic notion that emerged in these discourses and is of interest to my work is that of the knowing and producing subject in its relation to the worldly order. As will be argued, conceptions of translation articulated at the time a twofold and inherently ambiguous understanding of this notion: on the one hand, they asserted that both the social and the natural world are totally ordered for human beings, while on the other hand, they claimed that society and nature are constituted, transformed and transformable by autonomous human thought and action. This dual postulate identified knowledge with a process of deciphering and subsequently with representation of the world-order. It thus entailed a definition of man's cognitive capacity as a form of transcription: a faithful translation of things into words which knows no obstacles, because human thought is taken to exist in harmony with the order of nature, since both of them are created along with a divine image and meaning of things. It followed that despite its declared autonomy, thought and knowledge were thereby conceived of as already subjected to an order that stood beyond themselves, and were rendered at once absolute and incapable of genuine self-criticism and judgement. Yet at the same time no philosophy or translation theory asserted the possibility of such an idealised, total translation without weakening its confidence

with a doubt regarding the human potential to achieve this totality. Every endorsement of translatability, which claimed to have established a final image of the original and, in terms of philosophy, a final system of knowledge, was qualified before it was fully fashioned as an absolute, and regressed into partiality. By the same token, every certainty gave way to an infinite questioning of the rules that justified its validity. The moment human thought sought to represent the social and natural world in their immutable order, it was also obliged to avow that neither nature nor societies are totally determined for man, that they both emerge for us as the products of human, historical institution.

The tension between these convictions developed as a conceptual and simultaneously social and political construct. The supposition of autonomy and the concomitant subjection of thought to a given order developed in the context of institutional, social and political transformations to which this ambiguous discourse was intrinsically related. The principles that informed conceptions of translatability, and the broader issues of understanding and judgement they evoked, came to articulate the traits of a society in which individual freedom and sociocultural hierarchies prevail. What was then argued was that autonomous human cognition could only develop in the context of sociocultural divisions, which would presumably realise the natural destiny of human societies, the form of social organisation which is prescribed by nature, and should therefore be pursued by people. This hierarchical structure was nevertheless dissociated from *a priori* defined categories of individuals or groups that could be considered as co-substantial with authoritative or subordinate positions. Instead, what was claimed was the formal right of every individual to establish his social status by participating in a competition informed by equality of opportunity and the canonisation of individual freedom by a civil constitution.

These ideas entertained a multilayered relationship to the development of bourgeois societies and the institutions of liberal democracy by which these societies were politically organised. At a first level, metatranslation discourses emerged as articulations and simultaneously a means of naturalising the principles that defined their social context: a) a division of labour in a way that within a social unity each individual and group would occupy a specific position and function within the overall system of social production; b) the constitution of a framework of individual rights to property and contract, which entailed that a certain range of these activities were valued as higher than others and thus entitled certain individuals or groups engaged with them to a profit that was unavailable to others; and c) the development of an institutional and legal framework which facilitated a degree of social

mobility of individuals without challenging the stability of the structures that sustained social hierarchies.

Yet at the same time, conceptions of translation also enunciated a critique of these principles, which was simultaneously a form of self-critique and self-questioning. Far from being continuous and internally coherent, their apparent claim that intellectual and political autonomy could only be realised in modern bourgeois societies was disrupted and challenged by the very words that were employed to sustain it. The stability of the discourse which presented hierarchies and endless competition as the essential feature of all forms of collective life was thereby rewritten as contingent and precarious. What is more, it was shown to be a product and a reinforcement of a social world within which autonomy is undermined by being formally actualised in the context of social inequality, while knowledge is treated more as a mode of investment and social empowerment and less as an intellectual and cultural enterprise. That is to say, the same translation discourses which evoked an indisputable connection between autonomous thought and the subjection to a hierarchical and competitive social order, also articulated a dispute for their words; a form of subtext which not only indicated the ideological nature of their claims, but also made possible the conception of alternatives to them.

It may then be illuminating to provide, at this point, a brief description of the way the concept of 'ideology' will be used in this analysis. A useful way of categorising conceptions of ideology has been suggested by John B. Thompson in his *Studies in the Theory of Ideology*, in which the author proposes a division between "neutral" and "critical" approaches of the concept. The former define ideology as a merely descriptive term – that is to say, ideology denotes systems of thought, systems of belief, symbolic practices which pertain to social action or political projects. This means that there is no attempt to distinguish between the kinds of action ideology nourishes and animates; ideology is present in every social assertion, cultural product or political programme, no matter whether this is directed towards the preservation or transformation of a particular social order. On the contrary, for a 'critical' conception of ideology, the use of the term 'ideology' is essentially linked to the process of sustaining asymmetrical relations of power and domination (1984: 4) and while the distinction between ideological and non-ideological positions can be in this context a highly debatable issue, what is not disputed is the need for the maintenance of such a distinction, the preservation of a critical standpoint from which the social and political significance of discourse can be illuminated and criticised.

A similar division between 'neutral' and 'critical' conceptions of ideology has been suggested by Baker as the fundamental distinction between those approaches to translation that are informed by critical linguistics and those based on cultural studies. As she points out, from the perspective of the former, ideology

> is not necessarily a set of ideas that are false or politically undesirable. The definition of ideology here is more neutral and relates to the ways in which people order and justify their lives. Cultural studies, by contrast, tends to foreground the undesirable side of ideology in discourse and to suggest that it is deliberate and planned (1996: 16).

This foregrounding, Baker suggests, may give the misleading impression that a certain range of discourses – including those of translation scholars – are ideologically neutral; an implication that would be impossible to entertain from the perspective of critical linguistics "which sees all discourse, all commentary on the world or any aspect of it as a mediated version of the world and therefore not ideologically neutral or objective" (ibid.: 16).

While approaches to translation informed by cultural studies are not accurately described when identified with an uncritical condemnation of 'planned' and 'undesirable' discourses (and it is also questionable whether all applications of critical linguistics view ideology as neutral[27]), Baker's former category of ideology as an all pervasive discourse is helpful in setting up a limit against which the concept can be defined for the purposes of my own argument. This limit is precisely posited by the supposition that all forms of socially constituted thought are effectively identical to ideology, the view of "language *as* ideology", as Gunther Kress and Robert Hodge phrased it (1979); a thesis from which my use of the concept seeks to be clearly dissociated. To define ideology in these terms, namely as "the tacit assumptions, beliefs and value systems which are shared collectively by social groups" as Hatim and Mason suggest (1991:144), makes the important claim that all forms of thought and all linguistic articulations are embedded in particular social contexts and cannot be viewed as isolated from social determination and resonance. Yet at the same time it bestows on ideology so general and imprecise a meaning that the term ceases to be useful, not least because "any word which covers everything", as Eagleton aptly points out, "loses its cutting edge and dwindles to an empty sound". Not only is such definition unworkably broad, Eagleton suggests, but is also suspiciously oblivious of the ways specific historical discourses act to sustain processes of political power and relations of domination, which is precisely the significance of the term from a critical point of view (1991: 7, 28-30).

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[27]Basil Bernstein's employment of linguistics in the analysis of socialisation processes and reproduction of social classes is an indicative example of a different approach to the concept. On the issue see especially Bernstein's article "Social Class, Language and Socialisation' in his *Class, Codes and Control, vol. 1. Theoretical Studies Towards a Sociology of Language* (1971: 170-189).

What this position entails is not an analysis of ideology as the trait of historical objects, which may presumably be illuminated from the vantage point of the present. Instead, a critical approach to ideology necessitates, first and foremost, the development of a self-reflexive vocabulary, which would seek to examine models of translation research in terms of their social constitution and implications: as products of a certain kind of society, but also as means of endorsing, questioning or challenging the modes by which this society is instituted. Surely such a critique of ideology cannot be reduced to theoretical contemplation alone, however reflexive this may be. Insofar as this contemplation is unable to alter the social conditions of its engendering, it cannot but develop as an integral part of them and as ultimately responsible for the ideological violence it seeks to unmask and criticise. Given this limit, the contemporary analysis of cultural products, and translations in particular, can at least employ the potential for self-reflexion constituted by the ambivalences of modern thought, in order to illuminate the historical roots of its own assumptions and hypotheses, consider their contribution to social reality and seek to advance a problematic that would make possible its self-critique and transformation.

An attempt to relate contemporary models for translation analysis to their historical context, and specifically the intellectual and political tradition of modernity, will be made in the second chapter of this thesis. It will thus be argued that the advent of modernity, both as a discourse and as a social reality, stands in a relation of tension and interdependence to these models. Our modes of defining culture as the broader context of translation practice, sociocultural structures as the origin of translation norms and the subject as the most immediate cause of translation choices draw upon an interpretive space, whose terms and limits can be traced back in modern thought and shown to carry with them the ambiguous connotations of their origin. The key issue that will be discussed in this chapter is the development and function of translation norms. This topic will be examined from two different theoretical angles: namely polysystem theory and those approaches to translation that emphasise the critical role of the subject in the development of translation production. The thread of my argument will be based on an attempt to read contemporary theories through concepts provided by modern discourses on translation, knowledge and history, thus employing the latter as a means of indicating the historical roots, potentials and limitations of the former. This analysis will set up a key term for my subsequent discussion of translations of 'democracy': a conception of translation as a socially symbolic act:[28] that is, a form of signification, a medium, which articulates, addresses and seeks to legitimise or question the

[28] The term has been suggested by Jameson (1981).

social conditions within which it is produced at a *symbolic* level (i.e. constituted by language or other semiotic systems); and also an *act*, that is, a constitutive element of the social world which is expressed and conceptualised through it.[29]

The rest of this thesis will seek to relate these considerations to the translations of ancient Greek conceptions of 'democracy' in nineteenth-century Britain. Hence the third chapter will discuss translations of ancient Greek texts as a relatively unified system of works, which was introduced into the British polysystem at a moment of crisis and acquired a dominant position within the hierarchical structure of this polysystem. This process, as will be argued, was not the outcome of a universalisable structural tendency of the polysystem, which was purely formal in nature, but the product of the concrete historical conditions of the target society, which had already been articulated in modern discourses on translation, and were further sustained by the actual translations of conceptions of democracy, such as those included in rewritings of Thucydides' *History*, on which this chapter will focus. The latter not only posited the main logic by which the target polysystem developed – that is, a conception of culture and society as 'naturally' structured by contestable hierarchies; they further made evident the historical roots of this logic in the establishment of Britain as a bourgeois society, the empowerment of the middle class within it, and the institution of precepts by which social divisions and relations were naturalised. As such, these translations will provide a means for reading them as social and ideological constructs.

The fourth chapter will focus on a constitutive aspect of conceptions of 'democracy', namely the autonomy of the subject as an individual and social agent. On the basis of translations of Plato's *Protagoras*, it will be argued that nineteenth-century British thought developed a dual understanding of the notion of the subject, which stressed at once the subject's right to freedom and autonomy and the necessity for its subjection to authorities that were external to it. This claim, which was sustained by a range of substantial transformations of Plato's text, will make evident a further ambivalence in the historical status of the subject in the target society, within which the ideals of sovereignty and self-determination were complemented by a discourse which effectively cancelled autonomy by subjugating it to commercial necessities and laws, social hierarchies and state-power.

The fifth chapter will be based on translations of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, in order to discuss the relation of conceptions of democracy to the constitution of ethical appraisals and judgements. As will be argued, translations of the *Ethics* articulated the transition from a predominantly religious conception of the 'good', which held that the

[29] On the dual meaning of Jameson's conception of symbolic act which stresses both the imaginary and the

meaning of ethics was given to human beings as a revealed order of things, to the constitution of a secularised morality, whose central concept was 'duty'. The constitution of this discourse entailed the transformation of the code of 'virtue ethics' expressed in Aristotle's text and its appropriation by an 'ethics of duty', which corresponded to and fulfilled the need of a commercial society to control self-interested behaviour and channel social conduct into those directions that would ensure the maintenance and reproduction of existing social structures and relations.

Finally, the sixth chapter of this thesis will examine the relation of democratic thought to the constitution of justice and laws, on the basis of translations of Sophocles' *Antigone*. These works invite a double reading. On the one hand, they seem to have developed as endorsements of a dominant social discourse, which presented as interconnected human autonomy and subjection to authority, and was thus closely related to the ideological motifs that defined other translations from the classics. On the other hand, translations of *Antigone* enabled the enunciation of ideas that were incompatible both with these motifs and the social world that brought them into being. Instead, they voiced a discourse that was multivocal and self-critical, and brought to light as interrelated the ideological and utopian aspects of nineteenth-century liberal thought.

Taken as a whole, translations of the concept of democracy will be shown to have developed as a reaction to absolutist forms of politics and an endorsement of the liberal-democratic ideals that sustained the establishment of Britain as a modern bourgeois society. This means that translations, as will be argued, acted to legitimise a political system that was directly related to the historical advancement of industrial capitalism and the challenging of previous social structures and relations this enterprise entailed, by providing new social models to an ideologically confused audience, which still lacked a clear conception of its social and political identity. This move was realised by a process of transformation and manipulation of the source texts which related democracy to an abstract ideal of formal individual freedom and equality (employed as an equivalent of the Greek idea of citizenship) and defined democratic politics as a system of contestable social hierarchies that was presumed to establish a rational basis for the making of political decisions in a modern civilised society. This ostensibly consistent ideological discourse was, however, at the same time interrupted and fragmented by conceptual gaps, tensions and contradictions, which were inscribed in the translated texts and formed the precepts of a reaction to and critique of their historical context.

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genuinely historical nature of cultural products see Homer 1998: 43-44.

This thesis will be sustained by assuming a double mode of argumentation. On the one hand, I will employ theoretical viewpoints that were constituted by modern discourses on translation, knowledge and politics in order to view them as well as contemporary thought on translation as an object of study. This argumentative line will be predominantly engaged in the examination of theoretical concepts employed in translation research. On the other hand, my approach to these concepts will also seek to contextualise them, delineate their historical development and consider their relation to democratic thought. Finally, it will seek to appraise the usefulness of these concepts both as a means for approaching translations of democracy and for understanding, through this process, the historicity of methods by which contemporary translation research describes and constitutes its objects. Thus the conclusion of this study will turn from the nineteenth-century to the present context and seek to reflect on the repercussions of the modern thought on knowledge and politics for contemporary theorising. On the basis of concepts that derive from this tradition it will suggest that a critical approach to translation not merely necessitates a reflexive mode of theorising, but should further articulate a problematic that would contribute to theory's own transcendence by its relation to political praxis.

CHAPTER 1

CONCEPTIONS OF TRANSLATABILITY AND THE EMERGENCE OF THE MODERN SUBJECT

1. Understanding 'the Order of Things': The Possibility of Translation as the Possibility of Knowledge

In his letter on translation, written in 1530, Martin Luther (1483-1546) affirmed that he rendered the New Testament into German with faith: "I worked hard and faithfully on that translation" he wrote, and "I did it all to help my dear fellow Christians, and for the glory of the Man upstairs" (Robinson 1997: 88). This dual faith to the author of the source text and his contemporary audience was for Luther not merely the reason for his engagement with the enterprise of translation, but also the justification of his decision to adopt a specific translation method and render the original into the German vernacular. It was precisely his faith, he argued, which enabled the reconciliation of two mutually conflicting responsibilities of a Biblical translator: the writing of "the most exact possible rendering a man is able to provide" and the need to make the original accessible to those who were unable to gain access to it and therefore adapt translation "to the reader's understanding". The distance between these two poles, the source text and the target readership could be solved, Luther suggested, by a conscious turn to the target community and the employment of the language of the common people: "the mother in the house, the children on the streets, the common man in the market-place". Far from distorting the sacred meaning of the original, he stated, this language was the only means for the rewriting of God's words as he would have uttered them had he been speaking in German (Lefevere 1977:7-8).

The novelty of Luther's postulate did not consist in the attempt to reproduce the authority of divine meaning. The writing of the Septuagint[30], St. Jerome's (347-420) Vulgate or the numerous commentaries on the Scriptures are much older testimonies of a similar enterprise, which was followed by a series of non-European and (after the beginning of the fourteenth century) European translations of the Bible.[31] Neither was the endorsement of undiminished faithfulness to divine speech a new idea in the Western tradition. Quite the contrary. Luther's defence against the Catholic church ostensibly endorses the same belief in the source-text's sacredness which guides his opponents to attack his translation, and declares a faith which, if not altogether identical, appears at least to comply with the conviction that the word of God is the ultimate source and justification of human meaning and existence. What

[30] The translation was made from the Hebrew Bible during the period from 275 to 100 BC in Alexandria.
[31] On the history of Bible translations, see William Smalley's *Translation as Mission. Bible Translation in the Modern Missionary Movement* (1991) and Bassnett 1980[1];1991: 45-50.

was however radical in his translation was the positioning of divine words in the context of spoken vernaculars and the subsequent recognition of every individual as the legitimate interpreter of their meaning.[32] The writers of the Septuagint produced a translation which was assumed to reflect the uniqueness and authenticity of divine discourse, and therefore all of them wrote one and the same text, with no internal divisions or disagreements. What made the translations identical was not the skill of the translators, but the pre-existence of a unified and unifying spirit of God, who authorised their meaning. Once this unity disintegrated through the recognition of the original's different vernacular renderings, a transcendent world-order could no longer maintain its sovereignty. The authority of a *verbum Dei* could be shared with and subsequently subjected to the secular sensibility of human subjects. Yet this opened path to the disenchantment of the world was not simply actualised as an act of autonomisation and emancipation. As Peter Dews has aptly put it, the collapse of belief in a cosmic order that guides human endeavour constituted, at the same time, a trauma of such magnitude that Western thought could only struggle to come to terms with it; and indeed, the shock waves of man's disengagement from religious authority reverberated throughout philosophical thinking during the next centuries (1995: 1-2).

A century after Luther's translation, in the period described by Foucault as the Classical era of Western thought,[33] René Descartes (1596-1650) substituted the order of rational understanding for the hypostatisation of religious meaning: he had no doubt that reason could be the universal standard for the measuring and evaluation of the fallible human senses. Or, more accurately, he used 'Doubt' in order to resist both fallacious experience and scepticism, and advance to an objective, autonomous and verifiable conception of reality. His certainty exhibited little religious pretension.[34] Yet it did exhibit a profound enchantment with

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[32] Hegel was one of the first thinkers who drew attention to the contribution of Luther's religious and concomitantly political enterprise to the ideal of autonomous reflection and religious emancipation. As he emphasised in the *Philosophy of History*, the Reformation transformed religious into reflective thought that was disengaged from subjection to ecclesiastic dogmas and marked the beginning of a period in which "the Spirit [is] conscious that is free inasmuch as it wills the True, the Eternal – that which is in and for itself Universal" on the basis of a new "principle of subjectivity" (1840[1]; 1956: 412, 438; Cf. ibid. 412-457).

[33] See chapters 1-7 of *The Order of Things* (1966[1]; 1974: 3-216).

[34] While Descartes' references to 'God' in the *Meditations* (1641[1]; 1986) and the *Principles of Philosophy* (1644[1]; 1988) cannot be ignored, it seems that the concept of 'God' is employed in these works more as a principle which can verify human knowledge than as a means for setting up a transcendent realm of truth. From this point of view, Descartes' argument that the ultimate guarantee of truth-claims is God's immanent and perfect nature could also be read in a reverse order: it is because man *can* know, that he can also conceive and actualise divine standards of transcendence – that is to say, it is man's potential for knowledge which creates 'God' as the presupposition of knowledge's verification. Furthermore the actual historical conditions of the middle seventeenth-century must have played a significant role in Descartes' attempt to prove the existence of God in philosophical terms. In a time when Galileo was condemned for lack of faith (1633) – an event which made Descartes abandon his plans for the publication of *The World* – one could not really avoid mentioning divinity in a philosophical argument (however secular this may have been in its presuppositions and orientation) without considering the real dangers at which his life was immediately put.

Western rationality, which provided the philosophical foundation for a human equivalent of divine knowledge: a method for understanding through which truth-claims could be made reconcilable with the uncertainty bestowed on them by the lack of divine certainty and their subjection to doubt.

The key concepts around which this new knowledge developed, Foucault has suggested, were 'order' and 'representation', or more precisely, order *in* representation. While in the period that preceded 'Classical thought' (the term is Foucault's), the Renaissance, the foundations of knowledge of Western culture were set up by the supposition of 'resemblance' – a precept which entailed that the image of language could lead directly to the image of things, since the former was bestowed on the latter as a divine network of signs in need of deciphering[35] – Descartes' philosophy crystallised the discourse of an age which began to lose the security of God-given significance and wonder how the sign is related to what is signified by it. An answer to this question was found in the idea of representation: the conviction that language can be used as a means for the rewriting of natural order, the categorisation of simple elements and their progressive combination and taxonomy. The sciences of the 'classical age', Foucault argues, form a table, on which things are arranged into ordered and quantifiable patterns and networks. In this framework signs are no longer the divine imprint on things. They become a grid of representations, which measure and classify, and thus constitute all empirical forms of knowledge "as knowledge based upon identity and difference" (1966[1]; 1974: 71-76).

This change did not, however, mean that 'man' took the place of an originating 'God' who creates nature. On the contrary, the aim of 'representation' was the discovery of a world that existed in itself and whose elements were made representable through proper naming and classification. The crucial presupposition of this postulate, Foucault holds, was that man's capacity for understanding, human intellect and ultimately man himself stand in accordance with the universality of nature by being situated in language. From this perspective, what was named as 'rational' order of the mind acquired its immanent status by being considered as intimately connected to the order of nature. The main implication of this idea was that it precluded the problematisation of the process of ordering, it did not allow man to represent either himself, as the maker of representations, or language, as the medium which classifies, manipulates and provides the order of things. As Foucault puts it,

> Classical language as the *common discourse* of representation and things, as the place within which nature and human nature intersect, absolutely excludes anything that could be a 'science of man' (1966[1]; 1974: 311).

This subjection of the intellect to an order that was external to it was conceived of, in this context, as the utter realisation of man's freedom. As Descartes argues in the *Meditations*, truthful understanding is underwritten by its embeddedness in the freedom of the will, which is essentially identical in its human and divine manifestations[36] and becomes actualised through the very attainment of true understanding and judgement. Free human will, Descartes holds, consists in the fact that when the intellect puts something forward for affirmation or denial, for pursuit or avoidance, our inclinations are such that we do not feel that we are determined by an external force for our decision. Yet in order to be free one does not have to be inclined both ways. Freedom consists in the making of the 'right' choice:

> The more I incline in one direction – either because I clearly understand that reasons of truth and goodness point that way, or because of a divinely produced disposition of my inmost thoughts – the freer is my choice. Neither divine grace nor natural knowledge ever diminishes freedom; on the contrary they increase and strengthen it (1641[1]; 1986: 40)

For if "there is no reason pushing me in one direction rather than another", Descartes argues, what I experience is not freedom *per se*, but the "lowest grade of freedom" (ibid.: 40). This postulate seems to confirm Foucault's description of the classical *episteme*. For if man's (sic) self-realisation and discovery of truth are attainable by following an inclination that is bestowed on him by an immanent reason or a benevolent God, then man acquires both his identity and knowing potential through a subjection to an order that works through him, but is neither constituted by him nor is it directly accessible to him as an object of reflection and contemplation. Intellect is transcendent as surely as it is transparent.

Yet at the very moment Descartes argues for such an identity of 'subjection' and 'freedom' he also asserts that the very existence of man *qua* thinking being, that is, an existence consisting of deliberation and capacity for choice, is essentially based on the impossibility of an all-pervasive knowledge of the truth and the good, and thus the impossibility of man's total subjection to an order that stands beyond himself. As he argues in a remarkable passage, which brings us back to the centrality of 'doubt' in the constitution of truth: "if I always saw clearly what was true and good, I should never have to deliberate about the right judgement or choice" (ibid.: 40). But if deliberation and thought essentially stem from the impossibility of seeing clearly, are not man and man's gaze to the world also defined by their antithesis to the immanence of a universal order, are they not qualified by their engendering within doubt? And if this is true, does not Descartes' affirmation of the

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[35] See chapter 2 of *The Order of Things* (1966[1]; 1974: 17-45).

[36] As Descartes writes in the Fourth Meditation, "although God's will is incomparably greater than mine, both in virtue of the knowledge and power that accompany it and make it more firm and efficacious, and also in virtue of

transparency of representation, the possibility of truthful world-transcriptions become transformed, questioned by the very significance of 'doubt' in a method for measuring human experience?

It then seems that the Cartesian conception of knowledge emerges as divided. On the one hand, knowing consists of a discourse which is able to reach and represent reality by arranging itself in a system that perfectly matches a universal order; a table at which man and the world exhibit their immanence. On the other hand, the certainty to which this attempt gives rise is broken by some rupture, as Foucault would put it, which anticipates a deeper change that is already under way: the potential of total representation is rooted in its impossibility; man can think and understand the world, on the condition that perfect understanding is inaccessible to him, that representation is already a possibly transforming transcription, a potentially unfaithful translation.

If this dual enunciation of representation is still vague in philosophical discourses, its presence becomes gradually pervasive in the writings of literary and translation theorists since the seventeenth century, in which the idea of man as a transcriber of nature is complemented by the first signs of an acute problematic concerning the means and accuracy of 'transcription'. During this period Descartes' emphasis on inductive reasoning was mirrored, as Bassnett argues, by the preoccupation of literary critics to formulate rules and models of aesthetic production which took 'imitation' as the key to artistic creation. This precept did not quite mean that art was perceived as a merely imitative skill, the capacity to work along the lines of pre-existing models. On the contrary, art as imitation "was the ordering in a harmonious and elegant manner of Nature, the inborn ability" for artistic creation; an ability which "transcended definition and yet prescribed the finished form" (1980[1];1991: 58). This postulate entailed that the literary work followed models so long as these articulated the universal features of art, so long as they expressed an artistic capacity that stood in accordance with an immanent natural order. Thus, the logic that prescribed the idea of literary imitation was directly equivalent to the organisation of the classical *episteme*, as Foucault describes it: as for science understanding presupposed an accordance of the cognitive and the natural order, so for conceptions of literature man's inherent artistic capacity found its full realisation when it formed itself along the lines of the harmony of nature. Art was authentic so long as it was produced along the lines of timeless models, and thus literary creation, precisely as the outcomes of scientific enquiry, became the point *par excellence* at which man and transcendence intersected.

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its object, in that it ranges over a greater number of items, nevertheless it does not seem any greater than mine

At the same time, the complete subjection of the artistic faculty to a universal model was never conceived as absolute, never realised as fully compliant with an order of nature. As Cartesian philosophy took as its task the naming of a world that was perceived as standing outside man, but also created a space for self-questioning by relating thought to 'Doubt', so literary significance was indeed modelled along eternal lines, but was never actually seen as totally identical to them. On the contrary, it appeared to be discontinuous and contradictory, capable of achieving an immortality that was constantly displaced, that escaped from itself by the very steps that built its establishment. This move was most evidently manifested in the development of a problematic on literary translation and translatability from the middle of the seventeenth until the late eighteenth century.

The discourse on translation, and in particular literary translation, which emerged in England and France towards the middle of the seventeenth century[37] entertained, according to Hermans, a complicated and paradoxical relation to the notion of imitation. For although the two processes had often been described in similar terms since the beginnings of the Renaissance, they rarely, if ever, merged completely. Translation was seen at the time as a particular and restricted form of imitation, whose very goal, the full reproduction of the source text, was defined as ultimately unattainable (1985b: 103). Or to put it in another way, imitation was the aim, the essential feature and – paradoxically – also the limit of the translation process.

In the period until the middle of the seventeenth century, translation was described as a means of "providing access, unlocking, uncovering, removing obstacles, bringing into view" the hidden treasure of the original (Hermans 1993: 98; 1985b). The effort was deemed as both impossible and privileged. It was deemed impossible as a full transfer of words and sentences,[38] because the enigma of the world – i.e. the ultimate object of imitation, if we follow Foucault's analysis of Renaissance discourse – did not lie in words, but in the way language can reveal the divine secret of things and bring to light the world's hidden significance.[39] Yet translation was also privileged as a means of uncovering this significance; so long as it extracted "the hidden treasure from the bowels of the earth", as Thomas Sebillet wrote in 1548 (Hermans 1985b:104), that is, so long as it managed to unearth an image of the real (that is, divine) meaning rather than the wording of the original. A good translation

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when considered as will in the essential and strict sense" (1641[1]; 1986: 40).

[37] As Hermans points out, the changes that occurred in the discourse on translation at the time made possible the conception of 'literary translation' as a separate type, a distinctive category of translation (1993: 93)

[38] Jacques Peletier du Mans writes in 1545 about the "chimera of a total translation of Virgil, which would render the Latin word for word and sentence for sentence, while preserving all of the elegance of the original texts" and concludes that "it cannot be done" (Hermans 1985b: 104).

[39] See chapter 2 of *The Order of Things* (1966[1];1974: 17-45).

became thereby a means for deciphering this meaning through a topographical emulation of the source text – an idea that becomes evident in the metaphoric description of the translator as the writer who follows another's footsteps[40] – the reconstitution of the same image in space. For it was this topographical ordering of the text that was taken to reveal, by analogy, the order of things as a whole, as Foucault writes,[41] and thus translation as spatial imitation became a locus at which the signs of the text and the signs of nature were mutually interchangeable, being as a totality the signs of their divine origin. It is particularly significant that in this framework translation theorists, as Hermans points out, felt at ease about dividing the form and substance, form and meaning, in short the 'inside' and 'outside' of language, by using a wide variety of metaphoric images such as garment and body, casket and jewel, husk and kernel and so on (1985b: 120). For the two parts of these oppositions are united by a third term, namely what Foucault describes as emulation or analogy of all substances, no matter whether they are manifested in the text or in nature. Since all entities presumably bear on them the mark of God's unified meaning, they render the sign, their 'outside', into a path for the understanding of their divine inside. From this point of view translation confirms, up to this moment, the relation of texts and things as one of *aemulatio* (the term is Foucault's), which reveals the hidden immobility and perfection of the universe as surely as it would constitute, in the next century, one of the fundamental forces that undermined both this relation and the certainties it promised.

The emergence of a discourse on a "new", "libertine way of translating" in England towards the middle of the seventeenth century and its equivalent in France, described as "belles infidèles",[42] constitute a significant break in Western thought on translation as well as conceptions of understanding. This is not only because these theories endorsed the relative freedom of the translator instead of his servile submission to the source text, but because they introduced 'freedom' and 'servitude' into a discourse that presaged and in many ways anticipated a fully-fledged problematic on the cultural contingency and plurality of meaning, that would develop in more concrete forms only at the end of the eighteenth century. In a certain sense, the first step towards the formulation of this discourse was made during this period by a radical transformation of the relationship between translation and original as well as the relation of them, as texts, to worldly reality.

It can be illuminating to approach this change through the concepts Foucault uses for the description of the seventeenth and eighteenth-century *episteme*. As was briefly discussed,

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[40] On the use of the metaphor see Hermans 1985b: 108-109 and 1993.

[41] On the Renaissance's analogy between the topography of the image of the written sign and the signs ordered in nature see chapter 2 of *The Order of Things* (1966[1]; 1974:17-45)

this period is marked, according to Foucault's analysis, by the rupture of the relation of emulation among things manifested in signs, and the reconceptualisation of discourse as a form of intrinsically ordered 'representation'. In this context both translation and original text take a similar position as attempts at recapturing and actualising 'Nature' in the 'Spirit' of the artistic work, and thus both are, in a certain sense, equal, in their role as rewritings, representations of a universal order. Yet so long as this order had also to appear in the organisation of language itself, the Renaissance separation between form and substance was abandoned, and language came to be seen as a complete and unified system, whose perfection was secured by nothing outside itself, no concealed force apart from its manifested internal harmony. By the same token, the object of translation was transformed and was taken to consist of both "formal and conceptual properties" of the source text (Hermans 1985b: 122). While this idea enabled the evocation of a 'free' mode of translating, which appears to subject itself more to an overarching 'spirit' the author and the translator could share (as intellects participating in the order of nature) than to the source text *per se*, the medium of translation, language, was also grasped as a locus of differences between original and rewritten texts, and thus indicated the multivocality and particularity of literary 'spirit' and perception.

In this context John Denham (1615-1669), as Bassnett points out, suggests a concept of translation "that sees translator and original writer as equals but operating in clearly differentiated social and temporal contexts" (1980[1]; 1991: 59). For Denham the process of translation stood at one level beyond language and was a matter of grasping the spirit of artistic creation, while at a different level it was bound to linguistic constraints, since it was because of the transfer of the text from one language into another that this spirit was claimed to vanish. As Denham argued in the preface to *The Destruction of Troy* (1656)

> ... it is not [the translator's] business alone to translate Language into Language, but Poesie into Poesie; and Poesie is of so subtile a spirit, that in pouring out of one Language into another, it will all evaporate; and if a new spirit be not added in the transfusion, there will remain nothing but a *Caput mortuum* ... (Steiner, T. R. 1975: 65).

A number of points are noticeable in this statement. Firstly, Denham distinguishes translation from emulation, the close adherence to the words of the original. Translation, it is argued, is not simply a matter of transcribing language into language, but poetry into poetry, art into art. It lies in expressing the spirit of poetic work, which appears at first irreducible either to the work itself or to linguistic boundaries. That is to say, the spirit of poetry is expressed through language, but is not situated in it, it is articulated by words, but not experienced through differentiated linguistic networks. As such the essence of poetry becomes a universal. Yet it is

[42] On the issue see Hermans 1993:93; 1985b:105; Bassnett 1981; 1990.

only in the next sentence that Denham claims that this spirit would disappear by the rewriting of poetry in a different language and can only be revalorised by the addition of a new spirit in the translation. By this assertion literary meaning ceases to be a trait of 'Nature' and becomes an attribute of linguistic perspectives, it is recognised as universal and, at the same time, as embedded in the specificity of histories and cultures, which would subsequently become 'natures' in the place of a unified 'Natural order'.

A similar ambiguity gives rise to the description of translating as a transfusion of a work's 'spirit'; an idea which is found, according to Hermans, in a variety of metaphoric images that describe translation as a process of 'metempsychosis', 'migration of the soul', 'digestion' and 'engendering' (1985b; 1993: 99ff). These metaphors are employed in order to assert the possibility of imitation as empathetic rewriting of the source text, while expressing, at the same time, an emerging awareness of the linguistic and cultural obstacles to this process. With the exception perhaps of the idea of 'migration of the soul', which may imply a process of transfer in which the rewritten core of the original remains intact, all of the other metaphors evoke a tension between the possibility of faithful rendering and the need to recreate the spirit of the source text in the new cultural context. Metempsychosis, to which d' Ablancourt refers, is not the mere transfer of soul, but its dissociation from an old form of life and its containment in a different one through which the soul is engendered anew.[43] Likewise, digestion and engendering evoke as much the absorption of the source-text's spirit by the translator as a creative process mediated by her own language. The essence of a universal spirit of literature becomes thereby as visible as the manner of its differentiated historical engenderings. It is on these grounds that Abraham Cowley (1618-1667) would choose to focus on the "way and manner" of the source text writer in his translation theory and practice.[44] His emphasis is not an attempt to reproduce merely the formal features of the source text, but to rearticulate the accordance of meaning and manner of the original in a new linguistic order that develops in the target context.

From the middle seventeenth until the late eighteenth century translation theorists are bound by a loyalty that resembles Luther's dual faith in God and the target audience: their choices seek to follow at once a universal spirit – whose very stability is proved by the possibility of translation – and the particularised articulations of this spirit in different languages. In this sense the discourse on translation indicates, even at this stage, a limit to its contemporary conceptions of language as transparent to the world it is employed to describe

[43] The three components of the word 'metempsychosis', that is *meta* (after) *en* (in) and *psychosis* (the process of giving and engendering psyche) indicate precisely this meaning.
[44] Cf. Steiner, T. R. 1975: 67; Bassnett 1980; 1991: 59-60; Hermans 1993: 102.

and, subsequently, a fundamental rupture in a discourse that identifies understanding with the intellect's capacity to subject itself to a natural order. For while translation theory endorses that discourse that unites man and eternity, it also begins to undermine it, to anticipate changes that would render immanent truths as precarious, multivocal and finite.

It is precisely this dual adherence to the universal and the contingent that becomes crystallised in the writings of a theorist who has been described as the founder of the outlines of English translation theory (Steiner, T. R. 1975: 1), namely John Dryden (1631-1700).[45] Dryden described the translator as a portrait-painter, thus evoking a categorisation of translation as a "mimetic art" which draws "after the life" and should not transform life's "features" in order to improve a picture (1900: 1: 242).[46] He elaborated this metaphor in his preface to *Sylvae*, first published in 1685:

> Translation is a kind of drawing after the life; where every one will acknowledge there is a double sort of likeness, a good one and a bad. 'Tis one thing to draw the outlines true, the features like, the proportions exact, the colouring itself perhaps tolerable; and another thing to make all these graceful, by the posture, the shadowings, and chiefly, by the spirit, which animates the whole (1685[1]; 1987: 247).

Let us follow this passage carefully. Dryden does not merely say that translation resembles painting. He maintains that translation *is* a kind of drawing after the life. That is to say, while the model of translation-imitation is obviously the original, this object acquires a quality that transcends both the original and the translated text – it becomes the 'life', the 'spirit' which animates the outlines, features and colouring of the picture. The object of translation is simultaneously transformed, it is not confined to the source text, but to the way this text makes manifest the spirit for artistic creation which stands in accordance with the grace and stability of nature. As Dryden puts it in the "Dedication to the Aeneis", "nothing but Nature can give in good poetry a sincere pleasure. Where that is not 'imitated' 'tis grotesque painting" (1900: 2. 161). What is more, it is this spirit which actualises the order of 'Nature' that also constitutes the ideal subject of translation, rather than the translator himself, as a contingent intellect. As Dryden argues in the passage quoted above, the ultimate task of translation is not to copy the source text *per se*, but to restore its gracefulness by forming itself along the spirit that animated and gave grace to the original. The success of translation lies in

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[45] There are two book-length works on Dryden's theory of translation written by Frost (1969) and Sloman (1985). On this issue see also the forthcoming edition of Stuart Gillespie *John Dryden. Classicist, Translator*. Dryden's thought on translation was developed in the prefaces to *Ovid's Epistles* (1680), to *Sylvae: or the Second Part of Poetical Miscellanies* (1685), the dedication to his translation of the *Aeneis* (1697) and the preface to his translation of the *Fables* (1700). These texts are collected in Dryden (1900) and Walker (1987).

[46] This idea becomes common for most Neoclassical translators whose art, as T. R. Steiner points out, like its sister arts of painting, sculpture and music, as well as poetry, was perceived as a kind of 'mimesis'. Thus the act

its ability to reflect the stability of 'life' on which both the translator and the author draw, by subjecting itself to the spirit of this life and thus confirming its universal nature.

Yet when Dryden seeks to set up the particular rules for this process, in his Preface to the translation *Ovid's Epistles* (1680), the transcendence of a universal spirit becomes fragmented and differentiated. A translator is required to be a good poet, but also well versed in the different languages with which he is working. He must do his utmost to transfuse the general character of the original author, but nevertheless the nature of the translation ultimately depends on the audience for which it is intended (1900: 1.268-73); an audience whose difference from the original draws a limit on the intellect's universality and transcendence.

2. Translatability: The Power and Finitude of the Modern Subject

So long as people believed in the transparency of the *cogito* and thereby the identity of a discourse of representation and of things, language, the medium of discursive ordering, could not become the object of scientific contemplation. And so long as this *cogito* defined its features as the gift of a transcendent power of which it was seen as part, man could not regard himself as the origin and maker of acts of cognition. Classical knowledge, as Foucault wrote, precluded anything that could be named as the 'science of man' (above). Yet towards the end of the eighteenth century, a number of changes, evidenced in the discourses of economics, natural history and biology, linguistics and philosophy, effected a radical transformation of existing perceptions of knowledge and raised the question "what is man?" as the central object and presupposition of human understanding. It is at this point in Western thought that one should trace, in Foucault's view, the beginning of modern forms of understanding: an *episteme* which stemmed from the conception of man as the maker of worldly representations and at the same time the object of knowledge processes (1966[1]; 1974: 312).

Two aspects of this transformation are of interest to our discussion. The first can be summarised in the conviction that the foundations of verifiable cognition were found to be the limits of 'man': the possibility of modern knowledge emerged, as Foucault has argued, by its dependence on an essentially negative conception: human finitude. The second is that this grounding of knowledge on man's fundamental limitations asserted its positivity on the basis of an assumption of translatability, a belief in the universal communicability of truth-claims.

The most obvious representative of this change is found by Foucault in Immanuel Kant (1724-1804), whose *Critiques* establish precisely the possibility of objective knowledge,

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of translating was often called by them "imitating" or "copying from the life", while translation was described as

on the very condition that both the subject and the object of knowing remain fundamentally beyond man's cognitive capacity. The Kantian *I think*, as George Canguilhem puts it, is actualised as a vehicle for the concepts of understanding, a light which ensures the intelligibility of experience, but comes from behind us, and we cannot turn around to face it. It is posited as an in-itself, without being able to grasp itself for-itself: "The *I* cannot know itself as *Myself*". In the context of the modern *episteme* the transcendental subject of thought remains essentially an unknown (1994: 86). And so does the transcendental object of experience. Things-in-themselves put a limit on man's ability to grasp them and thereby human intellect is confined to certainties offered to it within the world of 'phenomena'. For this latter world, Kant maintains in the *Critique of Pure Reason*,

> is an island, enclosed by nature itself with unalterable limits. It is the land of truth – enchanting name! – surrounded by a wide and stormy ocean, the native home of illusion, where many a fog bank and many a swiftly melting iceberg give the deceptive appearance of farther shores, deluding the adventurous seafarer ever anew with empty hopes, and engaging him in enterprises which he can never abandon and yet is unable to carry to completion (1781[1];1929: 257)

Modernity, according to Foucault's reading, is epitomised in this startling Kantian image: in opposition to the creeds of the 'Classical era', for Kant the reality that surrounds human experience is opaque and remains essentially unattainable by us, but nevertheless renders truth knowable by enclosing it within man's permanent limits. This is not merely to say that this reality remains unknown because of the finitude of the human condition, but, contrariwise, that this finitude sets up the possibility of truth, that man's confinement becomes the location of all worldly meaning – the land of truth. Thus 'man' emerges as the measure of all things not despite, but by virtue of his enslavement: his capacity to observe his limits converts them into a positive foundation of knowledge (1966[1]; 1974: 312-318).

Let us briefly elaborate this point. The idea of finitude, in Foucault's view, becomes in the late eighteenth-century the hallmark of human existence in all its forms. Man realises that he is dominated by work, life and language, that his being is realised and can only be reached through them: through his words, his body and the objects he constructs. It then seems that these forms possess so stable and positive a truth, that man's intellect fades away absolutely against it, a truth that not only pre-exists man's ephemeral being, but also pre-constitutes it in its totality. Now, the crucial trait that defines modern thought, Foucault suggests, is not the mere realisation of the fact that man is neither sovereign nor infinite, but a twisted logic through which the very limits of his being provide the grounds for the possibility of both

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an "imitation", "copy", "picture", "likeness" (1975: 35).

knowledge and self-constitution. For it seems that each of these positive forms in which man can understand himself, namely, language, artefacts and the human body, is given to him only against the background of his finitude, and thereby the latter becomes "that upon the basis of which it is possible for positivity to arise" (1966[1];1974: 314). By this move, man's understanding of his limitations, the realisation of his subjection to the laws of a history, an economics, a language and a biology which precede him, becomes the path through which he claims total lucidity and sovereignty. Knowledge is thereby constituted by an "analytic finitude": an analytic "in which man's being will be able to provide a foundation in their own positivity for all those forms that indicate to him that he is not infinite" (1966[1]; 1974: 315). By the same token, total sovereignty emerges from the conviction that man's limits, as Hubert Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow explain, are not imposed *upon* him because of his intermediate place in the great table of beings, but are somehow decreed or imposed *by* man (1982: 29) precisely because his thought is capable of perceiving them *qua* limits. Thus in his confinement in the 'land of truth', man determines at once the laws of his being and the laws of nature through the understanding of himself as subjected to them. As Kant writes,

> However exaggerated and absurd it may sound, to say that the understanding is itself the source of the laws of nature, and so of its formal unity, such an assertion is nonetheless correct, and is in keeping with the object to which it refers, namely, experience. Certainly, empirical laws, as such, can never derive their origin from pure understanding. ... But all empirical laws are only special determinations of the pure laws of understanding, under which, and according to the norm of which, they first become possible (1781[1];1929: 148).

This postulate does not merely suggest that the truth of objects outside man's perception are 'imaginary' creations, whose existence in space and time is either doubtful or impossible to prove. Kant's thesis is that while our understanding of empirical reality derives from consciousness, it is the empirically determined – and thus limited and finite – consciousness of our own existence which proves the existence of objects in space outside us (1781[1];1929: 244-45).

No doubt this transition from an ordering of representations to a conception of man's intellectual capacities as constitutive of the world's order was bound to erode its certainties by the same supposition that was evoked to establish them. So long as man regards his gaze towards things as the condition of the world's existence as a conceivable object, while realising simultaneously that this gaze is entangled within positivities he neither controls nor masters, but which nevertheless determine the capacity of his seeing lucidly, then his thought is fundamentally attached to what exceeds it; it lies within and outside itself. Consciousness is bound to the 'unthinkable', to what stands outside its boundaries. The modern *cogito*, as

Foucault maintains, is imbued with the necessity of thinking the unthought, it becomes grounded on the unattainable, which constitutes its very condition. This means that understanding no longer lies in the inborn ability of man to grasp and categorise external entities. The modern *cogito* is not so much "the discovery of an evident truth as a ceaseless task constantly to be taken afresh". In this form, the modern *cogito* must traverse, duplicate and reactivate the articulation of thought on everything which is not thought, yet which is nevertheless not foreign to thought, in the sense of an irreducible, an insuperable exteriority. Understanding is not a discovery of the given truths of thinking but "the constantly renewed interrogation as to how thought can reside elsewhere than here, and yet so very close to itself, how it can *be* in the forms of non-thinking" (1966[1]; 1974: 324). Thought becomes transcendent as firmly as it becomes precarious and volatile, in need of perpetual self-observation and self-criticism and under the constant threat of self-doubt.

Conceptions of translatability are evoked to play a dual role in this context. On the one hand, an ideal of translatability is the means of ensuring the transcendence of the concepts through which understanding is possible by demonstrating their universality. On the other hand, the same ideal calls into question its mode of engendering by indicating that the truth embodied in these concepts also resides elsewhere, that it can be revealed through them on the condition that it constantly eludes them. Let us follow this point by returning to Kant's analysis of knowledge's presuppositions and processes.

As is maintained in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, no representation stands in immediate relation to an object and thus no concept is ever related to an object immediately, but to some other representation of it. Thus if cognition is actualised through concepts, judgement is thereby "the mediated knowledge of an object, that is, the representation of a representation of it". Representations can relate to their objects in two ways, Kant writes: either the object alone makes the representation possible, in which case the representation does not form an *a priori* since it only pertains to a truth of appearances; or the representation alone must make the object possible, not in the sense that it produces its object in so far as existence is concerned, but in the sense that it functions as an "*a priori* determinant of the object", that is, "if it be the case that only through the representation is it possible to *know* anything as an *object*". In this latter case all empirical knowledge of objects would necessarily conform to the concepts of representation "because only as thus presupposing [such concepts] is anything possible as *object of experience*". The crucial feature of these concepts, named as pure concepts or categories of understanding, is therefore that they universally and adequately constitute the *a priori* conditions upon which the possibility of experience rests, and which

remain as the underlying grounds of this possibility when we abstract everything empirical from appearances. (1781[1];1929:105, 125-126, 129-130). It follows that the forms of knowledge that derive from the employment of pure concepts of understanding are also universal, and therefore universally communicable and translatable. For it is precisely their total communicability that guarantees their objective accordance with the object. As Kant writes in the *Critique of Judgement*,

> Cognitions and judgements must be universally communicable. For otherwise we could not attribute to them a harmony with the object, but they would one and all be a merely subjective play of the presentational powers (1790[1]; 1987: 87-88).

Knowledge in this postulate extends beyond and is simultaneously based on the possibility of linguistic transfer. It extends beyond language and beyond a problematic on translatability, since the meaning of pure concepts forms the very basis by which the truth of cognitions and judgements can be established at a universal level, beyond their particularised linguistic articulations. Yet it is also fundamentally based on the possibility of translation, so long as the very existence of such a 'beyond' is grounded on a supposition of interlinguistic transfer, on the communicability of concepts which render experience possible in all forms of representation, in all languages.

No other postulate of Western theories of knowledge seems to confirm so directly Derrida's position that Western metaphysics, the *logos* of our philosophical tradition, came to be conceived as transcendent by defining itself "as the fixation of a certain concept and project of translation", by finding its origin in "a thesis of translatability". For the fundamental presupposition of this *logos*, Derrida points out, has been that "truth or meaning", which is what ultimately matters as knowledge, "is before or beyond language, [and so] it follows that it is translatable." Meaning itself is then assumed to have a commanding role, and consequently "one must be able to fix its univocality or, in any case, to master its plurivocality". Once this mastery is believed to be feasible, then translation, understood as "the transport of a semantic content into another signifying form, is possible"; and so is philosophy. There could be no philosophy, Derrida writes, in the sense of a discourse which makes a claim to truth, unless translation in this latter sense of the transport of semantic content is possible. From this point of view,

> the thesis of [Western] philosophy is translatability in this common sense, that is, as the transfer of a meaning or a truth from one language to another without any essential harm being done (1982[1];1985: 120).

For it is only within the horizon of an absolutely pure, transparent and unequivocal translatability, Derrida suggests, that the notion of a transcendent, universally communicable

signified that stands itself beyond linguistic particularities could be supposed to be the origin of philosophy. And it is only on this condition that philosophy could be viewed as the total and final articulation of such a beyond (ibid.; 1981: 20).

The status of this presumed signified or domain, as we learned from Foucault, stands close to the truth of our thought, but is never quite identified with it. Or to put it in another way, our truth can reach and transcribe it, while simultaneously delineating it as beyond any transcription and transfer, as the 'unthinkable' which underwrites all thought and sketches out its limitations. A similar point, it seems to me, is maintained by Derrida, in his description of translatability as "the thesis" of Western philosophy. In both *The Ear of the Other* (1982[1];1985) and "Des Tours de Babel" (1985) Derrida relates the supposition of translatability to the constitution of the "sacred", the assumption of a "proper name", which is supposed to occupy the origin of language, of belief, of truth. In the realm designated by this name, he states, understanding is both possible and impossible. Thus the name of *Babel*, the symbol of all tongues and meanings as well as the origin of linguistic diversity and translation signifies the city of God and the father of this city, while *also* meaning confusion. In this city, which is marked by "a patronym", "a proper name", "understanding is no longer possible" and at the same time it is actualised by referring back to its unique origin. The city of God, the realm of transcendence is thereby built through the construction and deconstruction of its borders, it is presumed to exist in virtue of the possibility and impossibility of translation (1985: 167-168).

It is this dual condition, the ambiguity of translation that establishes the glory and limits of the Kantian *cogito*. The power of the knowing subject, its authority, its capacity to constitute the sacred in a world that escapes from divine significance, occurs by surrendering its discourse to translation: an act which ensures the communicability of concepts of pure understanding in all mother tongues and renders true cognition and judgement universal. As Derrida writes,

> the sacred surrenders itself to translation, which devotes itself to the sacred. The sacred would be nothing without translation, and translation would not take place without the sacred; the one and the other are inseparable (1985: 204).

From this perspective, translation is not a mere transfer of meaning, but a promise of truth. It is a promise of adjoining languages like parts of a greater whole, in an attempt at appealing to a third one, "a language of the truth";[47] not to a language that is true in a trivial sense, adequate to some exterior content, but a true tongue, a language whose truth is self-referential

[47] Derrida's argument is developed as a reading of Walter Benjamin's essay "On the Task of the Translator" (1923[1]; 1992)

and requires nothing outside itself to authenticate it. A promise of truth as authenticity which belongs to a sacred original, but can only manifest itself in translation, in the multiplicity of human idioms (1985: 200).

Yet this is no more a victory than it is a defeat of the subject which pronounces its immanent position. For this 'beyond' which is assured and legitimised by translatability can only maintain its originating nature so long as it also resists transcription; so long as it is conceived as irrecoverable, unrepeatable, untouchable, genuinely unthought. This is precisely how the proper name *Babel* should be construed, Derrida points out: a name which evokes "the law imposed by the name of God who in one stroke commands and forbids you to translate by showing *and* hiding from you the limit". The truth of transcendence, being the truth of an unthinkable origin is apparently beyond every linguistic transfer and every possible translation. It does not lie in the representational correspondence between the original and the translated text, but in a language which underlies all others in their total communicability, while being identified with none of them (1985: 204, 195-196). What this postulate entails is that no human discourse can grasp this 'true tongue' and yet its existence is manifested in the ability of the 'languages of truth' to transform themselves into one another, to exhibit their immanent origin by articulating it in varied cultural forms, by asserting a possibility of translation that stems from translation's prohibition.

But what is the 'unthinkable' in this context? Of what does the 'beyond' of modern knowledge consist? And why did it develop this dual historical function as an affirmation and simultaneously a negation of thought's affinity to truth? If the development of secular understanding in late eighteenth-century Europe assumed the position of a sovereign creator, if it realised itself as the origin and maker of a worldly order, why did it make such a move of liberation by also enslaving itself, by designating a domain that stands irrevocably beyond its potential for understanding and judgement? Why did an act of reflexive knowledge and emancipation have to establish itself, once more, in relation to an overarching realm, a kingdom, as Derrida puts it, "that is never reached, touched, trodden by translation"; a kingdom that imposes on man a law that transcends him? (1985: 191).

Now it is true that there can be, and there have been, so many responses to these questions that my attempt at discussing them is far from seeking to exhaust possible answers. The hypothesis I shall aim to develop stems from an interest already anticipated, in a sense, and certainly felt as a dilemma by the modern tradition: how can women and men judge and choose when deprived of authoritative determinations of the true and the good? How can a disenchanted society deal with the tension between an essentially diversified vocabulary of

knowledge and morality, a thought that pertains to the multiplicity of meanings – exhibited in an exemplary way in the act of translation – and the deeper and more stable tenets that are necessary in order to foster and sustain choice and judgement? And how did late eighteenth-century discourse contribute to the conditioning and implications of this dilemma? It is from this perspective that I shall seek to discuss, in the following pages, the preoccupation of Kantian thought with the universal translatability of knowledge-claims and subsequently the Romantic attempt to challenge this conviction, in relation to the ethical and social bearings of the discourse of the Enlightenment.

3. The Knowing and the Political Subject: An Idea for a Universal History from a Cosmopolitan Point of View

For Kant 'Enlightenment' did not merely oppose an abstract evocation of intellectual blindness, but a very concrete condition of "immaturity" which prohibited men from using their capacity for autonomous understanding. As he argued in an article published in 1784 in *Berliner Monatschrift*,

> Enlightenment is man's emergence from his self-incurred immaturity. Immaturity is the inability to use one's own understanding without the guidance of another. This immaturity is self-incurred if its cause is not lack of understanding, but lack of resolution and courage to use it without the guidance of another. The motto of the Enlightenment is therefore *Sapere Aude*! Have courage to use your own understanding. (1784[1]; 1991: 54).

By immaturity, as Foucault explains, Kant means "a certain state of our will that makes us accept someone else's authority to lead us in areas where the use of reason is called for". This supposition implies that Enlightenment must be understood as a process in which men participate as a collective (since no man has presumably the authority to prescribe to others the laws of understanding) and as individuals, by becoming engaged in an act of courage to be accomplished personally (1984[1]; 1997: 305-306).

If Enlightenment necessitates the disengagement from authority and the employment of reason in the context of a collective enterprise it is because the full development of man's capacity for understanding and judgement is for Kant realisable within a social context. As he argues in his essay "Idea for a Universal History from a Cosmopolitan Point of View", also published in 1784,

> the highest purpose of Nature, which is the development of all the capacities which can be achieved by mankind, is attainable only in society, and more specifically in the society with the greatest freedom (1784[1]; 1998: 42).

Man, who is the only rational creature on earth, Kant writes, is destined to develop his distinct capacities, the use of reason, to their end (ibid.: 40). This purpose, however, is only attainable

in society, and furthermore, in a particular form of society: that which ensures the greatest freedom of its members.

The crucial point not to be missed in this statement is that it is not simply *man*, as a subject in isolation, who can accomplish intellectual maturity, but man as a social being, man as a *citizen*. An enlightened mind is thereby attributed to individuals, but the constitution of this mind is only feasible in a society in which men develop their rational capacity, while none of them stands in a position to impose his knowledge or authority on others. From this point of view, the notion of citizenship, as Étienne Balibar has argued, seems to play an irreducible role in the modern equation of the knowing, enlightened subject with the universal essence of man. For this equation has never been autonomous and complete in itself, but has always relied on a different term, an essential mediation between the other two, namely the citizen. Thus "citizenship", according to Balibar, "is not one among other attributes of subjectivity, on the contrary: it *is* subjectivity, *that form* of subjectivity that would no longer be identical with subjection for anyone" (1994: 7, 12).

The features of this society in which men as citizens can develop their potential, refine their taste and perfect their knowledge is for Kant one dictated by 'Nature'. These features have therefore a transcendent value. They do not pertain to the laws of a specific state, community or group, but are the universal laws people are destined to follow because of their natural disposition. Thus an appeal to the concept of universality appears twice in the title of Kant's essay: he calls for a *universal* history, that is, a history that demands the unification of all people in the context of a community, and he anticipates that this community will be guided by the rules of a *cosmopolitan* point of view, the principles of a universal law. These two conditions stand by and sustain each other; they emerge inseparable as the highest purpose of 'Nature' for humankind, which lies, according to Kant, as the presupposition of all other human goals.

A "cosmopolitan point of view", as Derrida has suggested, is in this context equivalent to a philosophical approach to history, to a transcendent law of philosophy that presumably guides or should guide human historical endeavour. What Kant proposes is that it is philosophy, as an inter-cultural, inter-national, universally translatable discourse which articulates the natural plan aiming at the total, perfect political unity of the human species. From this perspective, Kant claims that whoever might have any doubts about either such a unification or, above all, about the aims of 'Nature' for the humankind, would have no reason to subscribe even to the fact of sharing a philosophical problematic, a universal or universalisable philosophy (1994: 8-9). This is precisely the point put forward by Kant

through an important distinction between the truth of a cosmopolitan perspective, namely the immanent truth of philosophy, and the imaginary view of history produced by *Roman*, fiction. "It may appear strange and silly", Kant says, "to wish to write a history in accordance with an Idea" as to how the development of the world must be "if it is to lead to certain rational ends". For it seems that

> with such an Idea only a romance (*Roman*) could be written. Nevertheless, if one may assume that Nature, even in the play of human freedom, works not without plan or purpose, this Idea could still be of use. Even if we are too blind to see the secret mechanism of its workings, this Idea may still serve as a guiding thread for presenting as a system, at least in broad outlines, what would otherwise be a planless conglomeration of human actions (1784[1]; 1998: 46).

This statement recapitulates a fundamental precept of modern thought: that human knowledge becomes universal so long as it subjects itself to a higher condition, a plan of Nature, which is itself beyond questioning and beyond contemplation, but nevertheless produces man's capacity for rational and autonomous thinking. The truth of the 'Idea' which leads to an enlightened society, a "society with the greatest freedom", begins with a denial of freedom, the unreflective acceptance of that very plan or purpose which is presumably the natural end of every social being and every community.

But what does this philosophical 'Idea' consist of? As Kant suggests, the guiding thread that reveals the secret mechanism of Nature's working "starts with Greek history, through which every older or contemporaneous history has been handed down"; it continues with "the influence of Greek history on the construction and misconstruction of the Roman state"; "the Roman influence on the barbarians"; the "episodes from the national histories of other peoples insofar as they are known from the history of the enlightened nations". It ends with "the civic constitutions and their laws". This line, which is a line of progress, provides us with the fundamental "Idea", by means of which a historiography can illuminate the reality of the past and the present as part of a system of interrelated events which lead towards a predetermined end: a cosmopolitan society in which citizens live in accordance with a philosophical, universal point of view (ibid.: 46). It seems then that in this inevitable course of history, Greco-Roman Europe, philosophy and Western history are the fundamental driving force, as if nature, as Derrida points out, in its rational ruse, had assigned Europe among all communities its very special mission:

> not only that of founding history as such, and first of all as science, not only that of founding philosophy as such, and first of all as science, but also the mission of founding a rational philosophical (non-novel-like) history and that of 'legislating some day' for all other continents (1994: 12-13).

A future vision for the true purpose of history, ultimately merges with the present: man's purpose becomes identified with the tradition and the social life of a civil citizen of the late eighteenth-century.

An imperialist, Eurocentric move? Certainly not one that avoids the appropriation of all historical traditions under the name and the development of a European one. The Kantian 'Idea', which was so carefully sustained as the language that speaks throughout cultures, as the tongue which embodies truth, becomes a law that is neither as transcendent nor as removed from historical reality as it may have appeared to be at first. The society Kant prescribes as the land of truth seems to be deeply rooted in its historical present. Thus, despite all appeals to a cosmopolitan perspective, the attainment of universalisable cognitions and judgements posits as its absolute presupposition a concrete historical reality, that is, a civic constitution. As Kant writes,

> A perfectly just civic constitution, is the highest problem Nature assigns to the human race; for Nature can achieve her other purposes for mankind only upon the solution and completion of this assignment (1784[1]; 1998: 42).

By this assumption philosophy, a philosophy which comes into being as the realisation of a perfect intercultural translation, becomes the precondition of a specific form of politics, while at the same time a particular political society becomes the foundation of philosophical thinking. What is more, this philosophy and form of politics are given the 'natural' right to embrace all others and "force" the "human race" to renounce "purposeless savagery" in order "to enter into civic order in which [man's] capacities could be developed" (ibid.: 44).

What this prophetic thesis amounts to is an obvious cancellation of the Kantian position that enlightened thought is the trait of a society in which men – each man as a social being – have the greatest freedom to develop autonomous thought and judgement. Instead, the truth of reason prescribed by Nature is evoked to sustain the imposition of the Western self-consciousness on others as well as the originary subjection of this chosen philosophy to a hidden pattern – and the idea of the 'hidden' is often repeated by Kant throughout the essay – contrived by a power that overcomes human thought absolutely. Without the supposition of the 'secret', the 'untouchable' origin of this plan, the end of history and the end of man seem incomprehensible. Once accepted, a civil order ostensibly loses its historical status and becomes at once an ideal and a natural condition of social institutions.

But why does Kant need to evoke so emphatically this secret source of power in a text which consciously fosters and promotes human autonomy and equality? What is the role of Nature's providence in this imagined society which materialises the fundamental features of

the classical Greek *polis*, which Kant considers to be the origin of civil history: the freedom and equality of the Athenian democracy?

The key which might lead to an answer to these questions is found by Derrida in a minor, but nevertheless significant point: Kant's anxiety throughout the text to distinguish his philosophical view of history from an imaginative historiography, to reaffirm that his 'Idea' is neither a fiction nor a novel-like story; the eagerness to confirm that philosophy is above all not literature, not a body of fiction, but a Truth that is unitary and transcendent. For it seems that "the danger of literature, of the becoming literature of philosophy", Derrida points out, "is so pressing and so present to Kant, that he names and rejects it several times"(1994: 10-11). Indeed, in the seventh thesis of Kant's text it is argued that however "fantastical" (*schwärmerisch*) this 'Idea' may seem, "and it was laughed at as fantastical by the Abbé de St. Pierre[48] and by Rousseau",[49] we are obliged to accept it as the true understanding of Nature's hidden design. Likewise, in the ninth thesis Kant suggests that "a philosophical attempt to work out a universal history according to a natural plan directed to achieving the civic union of the human race must be regarded ... as contributing to this end of Nature" and as opposed to fiction, "*Roman*" (1784[1]; 1998: 43-44, 46). This distinction is, in Derrida's view, both crucial and revealing. For it is literature, or more accurately, some events in the body of texts that is called 'literature', which constantly undermine or displace the philosophically established opposition between the literary, fictional and the philosophical, the event that claims to pertain to a sole language, a language devoid of idioms and cultural particularities and is at one and the same time truly cosmopolitan and the language of truth (1994: 10-11; Adams, Behler et al. 1996: 18-19).

Yet literature, which Kant seeks to exclude from the universal 'other' of philosophy, Derrida suggests, is in fact precisely what philosophy, the 'Idea' of philosophy, has always been. For this philosophy has never been "the unfolding responsible for a unique originary assignation linked to a unique language or to the place of a sole people". It did not have one sole, unitary, universalisable memory. Instead,

> under its Greek name and in its European memory, it has always been bastard, hybrid, grafted, multilinear and polyglot (1994: 15).

Equally hybrid and polyglot, equally multivocal has been the social reality Kant imagines as an embodiment of philosophical excellence. Thus what is said here about philosophy, Derrida

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[48] Charles-Irénée Castel, Abbé de Saint Pierre (1658-1743) in his *Projet de paix perpetuelle* (Utrecht, 1713). Transl. H. H. Bellot, London, 1927.

[49] In his *Extrait du project de paix perpetuelle de M. l' Abbé de St. Pierre* (1760). Transl. C. E. Vaughn, *A Lasting Peace through the Federation of Europe*. London 1917. This information is provided by Kant's translator of the essay.

argues, "can just as well be said and for the same reasons of law and rights, and of democracy" (ibid:15).

The opposition between a philosophical historiography, embodied in the 'Idea' for a universal history, and the *Roman* is crucial in Kant's argument. For the very truth and validity of his 'Idea' does not claim any use of reason. It is rather sustained by evoking man's 'natural' destiny – an argument that cannot easily be designated as a rational one – and by opposing itself to what is excluded by it: the *Roman*. But is it actually the literary discourse, that is, a category and form of writing, from which this universal 'Idea' has to guard itself? *Roman* did not merely mean literature in eighteenth-century German. The term, which was originally employed to name works written in the vernacular, as opposed to Latin,[50] maintained up to that moment strong connotations of the idea of popular imaginative literature, and prose in particular.[51] As Ernst Behler has suggested, when Kant says in this essay that he does not want to engage in a *Roman*, he is not referring to the highest type of literature. "*Roman*," "novel," was rather equivalent to "*romanesque*" prose, something popular (Adams, Behler et al. 1996: 19).

This notion of popular and low literature does not merely contradict a conception of 'Man' as a subject of a universal discourse, but the Kantian supposition of this discourse as the product of men *qua* citizens, that is, men in a society of equality and autonomy. For while Kant assumed that a rational and enlightened mind is the natural trait of men, he also claimed that the potential for enlightened thought can *only* take place in a particular social context, in a universal civil society with a "perfect constitution" ensuring the freedom and equality of its members. Yet the opposition between the 'popular' and the 'true' creates an obvious imbalance in this argument. For it constitutes the 'universal truth' of reason on the grounds of a fundamental annihilation of the social conditions of equality from which reason was initially supposed to emerge. It says that knowledge pre-exists the society which was supposed to produce it. For how can one claim that truth is only born in a social context of equality and that this truth should be based on an *a priori* opposition between the 'popular' – that is, a non-philosophical, socially marked term – and the 'true'?

This moment of imbalance is not an infelicity, a mere slip of the tongue which can automatically and inconsequentially be excluded from the Kantian thesis. Or, to put it more accurately, this imbalance is significant precisely as a 'slip of the tongue', as a symptom

[50] The word 'roman', as J. A. Cuddon points out, is French in origin and first denoted a vernacular language as opposed to Latin. In the history of literature, 'Roman' referred to imaginative works in the vernacular, mainly epic writings, and by the sixteenth century it was applied to works in prose (1976[1]; 1991: 802).

[51] See also: Kluge's *Etymologisches Wörterbuch der deutschen Sprache* (1995) and *Etymologisches Wörterbuch des Deutschen* (1989) s.v. 'Roman'.

which, by analysing, can direct us to the historical reality which made necessary its appearance.[52] My use of the term 'symptom' is based on this initial assumption. It presupposes that the antinomy in Kant's thesis should be interpreted as part of the constitutive elements of the thesis itself, rather than as being accidentally related to it. What this means is that Kant's occasional objection to the inter-subjective constitution of truth in a context of social equality and autonomy (which would have, otherwise, been the logical outcome of his argument) does not consist in a contingent inability to apply the postulate of 'universal civil society' to an isolated case (so that we could simply endorse his thesis on truthfulness after correcting this mistake), but is an indispensable element of his suggestion that such a society is the legitimate end of history and simultaneously the presupposition of an historiography which enunciates the 'hidden' purpose of 'Nature'.

The issue raised by Derrida remains. Does this symptom reveal that the appeal to universality – a dual universality of historiography and history – is disrupted by a deeper and largely unconscious recognition: that the truth *about* history has not and cannot be embodied in a universal tongue, that human knowledge has always been 'bastard' and 'polyglot' (precisely as it appears in translation) and so has been the truth *of* history, or at least the history of a society which would realise the ideals of freedom, equality, human rights and democracy? Does Kant acknowledge, by this persistent reference to the *Roman*, that philosophy is threatened by the truth of *literature*, a truth that is neither universal nor unitary, but necessarily contingent and multivocal? If the reading of the *Roman* as 'popular literature' is valid, and if one's emphasis can reside on the 'popular' rather than the 'literary', then *Roman* becomes more a metonymy for a social condition and less for a textual form. In this sense, *Roman* evokes a range of distinctions of 'taste' – between the 'vulgar' and the 'civilised', the 'non-authentic' and the 'authentic', the 'common' and the 'distinguished', the 'unrefined' and the 'refined' – which are, as Pierre Bourdieu has argued, distinctions made by social subjects, whose position in the context of man-made classifications is expressed or betrayed by their act of distinguishing. From this point of view, talking about popular literature articulates and sustains a social division. It is an expression of 'taste' which classifies, as Bourdieu puts it, and "it classifies the classifiers" (1979[1];1984: 6).

This social classification is not made by Kant as a direct proposition. It takes the form of a symptom. This means, in the terms of psychoanalytic criticism, that it betrays an attempt

[52] A 'symptom', according to Freud, appears as the outcome of a (partly successful) attempt at 'repression', a process of "turning something away, and keeping it at a distance, from the conscious" as well as removing from consciousness any causal relation between the 'symptom' itself and its point of origin. Yet while this connection is erased from the subject's consciousness, it is possible, Freud has suggested, to "reconstitute a conscious translation of the repressed" through our interpretation of symptoms (1916-17[1];1991, 1915[1];1991:524,526).

to forget and conceal, to erase from memory a traumatic experience which only resides in the unconscious.[53] This is not, however to be understood as an individual, but as a collective, social and, in Jameson's terms, a political unconscious (1981). The experience at stake is not a personal, but an historical and social experience: it derives from the very participation of the subject in history, defined here as a totality which includes the speaking subject and acts as the ground and the invisible cause of the subject's thoughts and actions. What then is this repressed experience and knowledge which makes this sudden appearance in Kant's text?

Let us attempt to respond to this question by returning to Kant's description of the community which stands at the end of history. As it is argued in the fourth thesis, the organising precept of a civil and enlightened society is "antagonism ... so far as this is, in the end, the cause of a lawful order among men". This is again an idea that is supposed to be prescribed by Nature. As Kant argues, Nature demands from man the constitution of a society

> in which there is mutual opposition among the members, together with the most exact definition of freedom and fixing of its limits so that it may be consistent with the freedom of others (1784[1]; 1998: 42)

For while men need to associate with others and form societies, Kant suggests, they are also inclined by Nature to isolate themselves from others, because each man finds in himself at the same time the characteristic of wanting to have everything go according to his own wish. The unavoidable social opposition, the social war that emerges from this trait is for Kant a desirable one. For it is this opposition which awakens man's powers and induces "the first true steps from barbarism to culture, which consists in the social worth of man". If a society is devoid of those characteristics from which opposition springs, if every man was not "propelled by vainglory, lust for power, and avarice to achieve a rank among his fellows whom he cannot tolerate but from whom he cannot withdraw", then all talents and all worth would remain hidden or unborn. It can thereby be inferred, according to Kant, that

> men, good-natured as the sheep they herd, would hardly reach a higher worth than their beasts; they would not fill the empty place in creation by achieving their end, which is rational nature. Thanks be to Nature, then, for the incompatibility, for heartless competitive vanity, for the insatiable desire to possess and to rule! Without them, all the excellent natural capacities of humanity would forever sleep undeveloped (ibid.: 41-42).

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[53] The repressed origin of the symptom, Freud wrote, consists of "constitutional dispositions ... [which] are after-effects of experiences by ancestors in the past" and of a traumatic experience which the 'subject' seeks to erase from memory (1916-17[1];1991: 542-543).

Competition and hierarchy that derives from the power to possess and to rule not only become naturalised in this argument; they are posited as the foundation of human progress and the basis of a society that develops man's capacities in accordance with 'truth' and 'reason'.[54]

If this were the end of history, then the future Kant envisages *was* his present. Yet Kant did not intend to give an apology for the *status quo* of bourgeois societies and could not have accepted the identity of his Utopia and the modern commercial world of the late eighteenth-century Europe. He saw his present as a step towards the end, but not as the end itself of history. He, indeed, believed that "purposeless savagery held back the development of the capacity of our race" which was finally "forced ... to renounce this condition and to enter into civic order in which those capacities could be developed". Yet this had not yet been realised, in his view, by bourgeois societies, which were as detrimental for human progress as were the "savage" ones. Thus he argues that the development of human capacities was also held back "by the barbaric freedom of established states": "through wasting the powers of the commonwealths in armaments"; "through devastation brought on by war"; and by holding themselves in readiness for war. These conditions, Kant writes, do not lead mankind toward its end. They instead undermine and "stunt the full development of human nature" (ibid.: 44). It was Kant's genius to see how his contemporary civilisation was less civilised, less cultured, less enlightened than he at first claimed it was. As he argued,

> To a high degree we are, through art and science, *cultured*. We are *civilized* – perhaps too much for our own good – in all sorts of social grace and decorum. But to consider ourselves as having reached *morality* – for that much is lacking. The ideal of morality belongs to culture; its use for some simulacrum of morality in the love of honor and outward decorum constitutes mere civilization (ibid.: 44).

Yet by the same move he criticised and rejected these social features, Kant, as was argued, also endorsed the constitutive traits of modern civilisation ('competition', 'self-interest', 'lust for power', the 'desire to possess and to rule') and saw in their realisation an ideal and enlightened future: the end of human nature and the universal end of history.

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[54] Kant was far from being alone in seeing antagonism, lust for power, possession and distinction as the hallmark of civilisation and enlightenment. In the British context, a similar idea is developed by the representative of the Scottish Enlightenment Adam Ferguson (1723-1816), whose *Essay of the History of Civil Society*, written in 1767, also sought to suggest that the freedom to possess and compete over the acquisition of property is the key for the distinction between "civilised" and "barbarous" cultures. "It must appear very evident", Ferguson argues, "that property is a matter of progress", so long as it is acquired and distributed in the context of a civil order. For in this context property requires the acquisition of method for defining possession, the industry by which it is gained and improved, a habit of acting with a view to distant objects and suppressing present dispositions either to sloth or to enjoyment (1767[1]; 1966: 82). Likewise, the *Déclaration des droits de l'homme et du citoyen* approved by the National Assembly of France five years after the publication of Kant's essay (26.8.1789) would reassert his ideals: the identity of 'man' and 'citizen'; the natural rights of 'citizens' to liberty and equality; and the right of men to compete for and secure by law their acquisition of property.

What is repressed in this ambiguous thesis is the knowledge that these constitutive traits of modern civil societies are precisely those conditions that cancel the possibility of enlightenment, as Kant had envisaged it: a reality of universal citizenship in a society which produces truth on the grounds of equality and autonomy. The forgotten connection, which emerges in the form of a symptom, is that between Kant's own words and his contemporary society; a society which has posited as natural a condition of social divisions and inequality, and has idealised power-relations and man's desire to possess and to rule. Kant's ideal of incessant competition was precisely the foundation of the social world he sought to criticise and reject as immoral and devoid of culture. The symptom of his attempt to forget this relation emerges through what Slavoj Žižek has described as a logic of sublimation: a process of shifting the location of social hierarchies from human relations to relations between 'things'[55] – in this case a philosophical discourse about history and the *Roman*. This is the point at which an experience of history which resides in the unconscious emerges as refracted and internally divided in the text: as an ideological attempt to conceal and a means of revealing a suppressed truth about and of history: that of the persistence of social hierarchies and lack of enlightenment in the context of civil-bourgeois societies.

The crucial point in this suggestion is that the ideological nature of this discourse, should not merely be seen as lying in a 'concealment' of the historical real. For civil societies *are*, in a sense, based on the ideals of 'freedom', 'equality', 'autonomy' and 'democracy'. The ideological function is inscribed in the specific historical meaning of these concepts, and the social relations and practices they act to sustain and naturalise. For these concepts, as Žižek argues, are defined in order to evoke a universality whose realisation *necessarily* includes a specific case which breaks their unity and lays bare their falsity. That is to say, the ideal of 'freedom' is a universal notion comprising a number of species (such as freedom of speech, consciousness, commerce and so on), but also, by means of structural necessity, a specific kind of freedom, that of the worker to sell freely his own labour on the market, which is precisely the precondition for the loss of his freedom; that is, the real content of this free act of sale is the worker's enslavement to capital. The same point can be argued with regard to the ideal of equal competition and equivalent exchange in the context of a free market. Its universalisation and generalisation is necessarily accompanied by the appearance of a paradoxical kind of commodity, namely the labour power, which becomes the negation of equality, the very form of exploitation, of appropriation of surplus-value. This breaking point, the moment of inconsistency, is then expressed as a social symptom, i.e. as a particular

[55] For a further discussion of this issue see Žižek's work *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, especially chapter 1

element, which subverts its own universal foundation, a species subverting its own genus; a 'mistake' at which the truth of social relations emerges (1989[1];1994: 306-7).

From this perspective, this is also a moment of self-denial which is directly related to the 'secretness' of nature's assumed design. For the 'hidden' plan of nature, the conception of thought as a positivity achieved in the present and a debt to a thought which lies elsewhere, entails an acknowledgement of the fact that within this social present it is not possible to conceive of the truth of history, to write a universal, philosophical historiography. Kant literally writes this when he introduces the nine theses of his essay by stating that

> since men in their endeavors behave, on the whole, not just instinctively like the brutes, nor yet like rational citizens of the world according to some agreed-on plan, *no history of man conceived according to a plan seems to be possible* (1784[1]; 1998: 40).

For the concepts and means for such historiography and history can only emerge, as Kant wrote, from a society of equality and freedom – and modern bourgeois societies have established neither the former nor the latter.

4. Translation in Cultures: 'Untranslatability' as a Critique of 'the Order of Things'

The year that Kant wrote his essay on history, Herder (1744-1803) began a work that was also concerned with the philosophical representation of history: the *Reflections on the Philosophy of the History of Mankind* (1784-1791[1]; 1968). Herder's problematic started with a supposition that the essence of man, as he had already argued in his "Essay on the Origin of Language", lies in language, which was for him identical with the capacity for thought.[56] It followed from the diversity of languages that human nature, as it is manifested in "social cultures", must also be differentiated. Thus, each linguistic community, Herder argued, develops a particular worldview and cultural character that pertains to the community's language and history, and constitutes a unique actualisation of man's nature. Such a division of humankind by languages and cultures, which coincide with the limits of national communities, Herder suggested, is a natural condition, and any attempt to violate it by political expansion and cultural oppression is posited against the plan and purposes of nature. As he wrote,

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(1989[1]; 1994: 11-54).

[56] In Herder's view, to talk about a pre-linguistic or an a-linguistic phase of the human species (an idea held by a number of his contemporary thinkers) is not merely a mistaken but a meaningless hypothesis. As he argued "Man, endowed with a mind – a characteristic peculiar to himself alone – has by his very first act of spontaneous reflection invented language" (1772[1]; 1969: 135). For a further discussion of this issue see Breuilly 1982: 336ff.

> Since the whole human race is not one single homogeneous group it does not speak one and the same language. The formation of diverse natural languages, therefore is a natural corollary of human diversity (1772[1]; 1969: 165).

The conception of 'culture' as a distinct expression of human nature effected a significant break with the Kantian notion of universal knowledge and society. In contrast to the idea that the history of humankind was a unified process, which led to the late eighteenth-century European civilisation, Herder, as Raymond Williams points out, spoke of "cultures in plural": "the specific and variable cultures of different nations and periods, but also the specific and variable cultures of social and economic groups within a nation" (1976[1]; 1988: 89). This was a radical idea. In a context in which it was common to distinguish cultured (i.e. civilised) from uncultured nations, Herder, as F. M. Barnard suggests, insisted upon a conception of culture as a universal phenomenon. There is no such thing, he asserted, as a people devoid of culture (1969: 382).

What is more, Herder spoke of cultural variety from a point of view that was significantly distanced from the Kantian political vocabulary. While for Kant civilisation could not be dissociated from the society in which it develops and the grounds of the civilising process were located by him in civil society,[57] Herder described the idea of culture as a kind of collective identity, which is formed through a community's particular language and history, but has no sociopolitical significance. In other words, for Kant, participants in civilisation are individuals as social beings, as citizens. For Herder, participants in culture are individuals, whose sense of identity derives from their participation in a shared soul or character articulated in a group's language. In this sense, Herder's conception of "social cultures" also differed from his contemporary understandings of society as the outcome of social contract and agreement or as a stage of development that overcomes the human tendency for competition and antagonism. Herder explicitly opposed both Rousseau and Hobbes by describing cultures as the products of the natural unity of communities, which begin, in his view, as kinship groups and become tribes and then nations by extending their organic unity. "The laws of nature", he argued, "are more effective than all political contracts.

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[57] This was not only Kant's position. The notion of civilisation was generally related to Western European civil societies during the seventeenth and especially eighteenth centuries. In England the term 'civility', as Raymond Williams points out, was often used during this period where we would now expect to find the term 'civilisation' (1976[1]; 1988: 57-58). In the context of the Scottish Enlightenment, Ferguson, as has already been argued, related 'civilisation' directly to the rules for the possession of property established in civil, commercial societies, and opposed this notion to the 'barbarism' of nations which have not yet established such rules (1767[1]; 1966: 74-107). Broadly speaking 'civilisation' according to Emile Benveniste, was coined at the time in order to describe the civil life and organisation of modern societies which enabled the development of the sciences and arts, and the cultivation of a mind and polite manner of behaviour and conduct that characterised, or at least was deemed to be appropriate for urbane middle and upper class relations. For a further discussion of this issue see

Rousseau and others have written many paradoxes on the origin of and the right to private property" as the basis of social unity. Yet the roots of such a unity, Herder suggested, lie, in fact, in the unifying force of a mother-tongue and a shared culture (1772[1]; 1969: 164-166). It followed that men are neither predisposed to compete with each other nor artificially brought together by agreement. "Man", it was argued, is neither "a Hobbesian wolf nor a lone creature of the forest, as Rousseau would have it; for he has a communal language in which to communicate" (ibid.: 167). These assumptions gave rise to a crucial difference between Herder's social insights and the views of a wide number of his contemporary thinkers, who described society as a condition that is external to individuals and imposes on them laws that limit and control, but never efface, their (assumed) desire for antagonism, competition and power. In contrast to Hobbes, Kant, Ferguson and, in a sense, Rousseau, Herder described culture as a unifying power, which brings a group together in a harmonious whole. Conflict, in his view, can develop among but not within cultures.[58]

The distance between Herder and the above thinkers was founded in their different conceptions of the relationship between the human subject and society or social culture respectively. From a perspective that describes antagonism as an essential feature of human nature, there exists a categorical difference between society, as an organised entity and the social subjects which belong to it. For in such a case, a society's organising principle, as was discussed in relation to Kant's essay, is found on a fundamentally inhuman category, that is, a constitution which cannot be considered as co-substantial with the thought and authority of a human being.[59] This means that society can be maintained even if conflict exists among its members, so long as this conflict is regulated and limited by a political constitution. On the contrary, for Herder the idea of culture stands in direct analogy to his conception of the individual subject as unified, and is, in a certain sense, a categorical extension of it. As such, it entails a degree of integrity and unity which is much higher than that found in a sociopolitical organisation.

Benveniste's *Problems in General Linguistics*, chapter 28, "'Civilisation. A Contribution to the History of the Word" (1971: 289-296).

[58] Conflict and friction, as Herder argued, must be related to the differentiation of cultures and while they can intensify cultural differences, they are simultaneously forces which strengthen the unity of a tribe or nation (1772[1]; 1969: 167-170).

[59] As Kant argues in the sixth and seventh theses of his essay on history, every man who lives among others of his kind requires a master, for he certainly abuses his freedom with respect to other men. He thus requires a master who will limit his selfish animal impulses and force him to obey a will that is universally valid, under which each can be free. But if the master is a member of the human race, then the master is himself an animal, which would abuse public justice and freedom. He himself therefore needs another master. The solution to this problem, which can continue *ad infinitum* without any possibility of positing a master who is not a human being, is to be found in the establishment of "a perfect civic constitution" (1784[1]; 1998: 43-44).

In this sense, it seems that the notions of the unique and distinct character of culture are attributed by Herder first to individual human beings and then, as if by analogy, to cultural entities. Each man, as is argued in his *Philosophy of History*, is a unique world, which is different to all others, and with whom no other man coincides. As he puts it:

> No two leaves of any 'one' tree in nature are to be found perfectly alike; and still less do two human faces, or human frames, resemble each other. Of what endless variety is our artful structure susceptible! ... "No man," says Haller, "is exactly similar to another in his internal structure: the courses of the nerves and blood vessels differ in millions and millions of cases ...". But if the eye of the anatomist can perceive this infinite variety, how much greater must that be, which dwells in the invisible powers of such an artful organization! So that every man is ultimately a world, in external appearance indeed similar to others, but internally an individual being, with whom no other coincides (1784-1791[1]; 1968:3-4).

This concept of individuality as a unified and singular entity provides Herder with the prototype for the notion of cultural community. The logic behind his conception of 'cultures in plural' emphasises the internal unity of each culture as much as it differentiates among them. As every man is, by nature, a world that is distinguished from all others, but nevertheless a *whole* world, so every culture, according to Herder, is essentially unique, but the various constitutive elements of it exist as inseparable parts of an overarching entity. Culture represents a world which is, in a sense, equivalent to the world represented by each individual.

What is more, the traits and development of cultures are identical to those features of individuals which can only be posited in the private sphere of family and personal relations: cultures grow or decline naturally, they have "forefathers", "fathers" and "mothers", they communicate in a mother-tongue and they exist in a sphere which is separated from the realm of social and political relations.[60] Cultures may of course be born or die, as with people, but this can only happen as a result of processes of evolution or decline (precisely as a human body grows old). Yet neither cultural evolution nor cultural decline are the products of social conditions and relations. On the contrary, cultural evolution is, according to Herder, the direct product of the interrelation between individuals and cultures, while it can only be prohibited by political processes. In his view, the proper foundation of a sense of collective identity, as F. M. Barnard has argued, is *not* the acceptance of a common sovereign power – be it a civil constitution or a governor – but the sharing of a common culture (1969a: 7). Hence the various cultures provide the frame of mind, habits and language which form men's distinct

[60] Terms which pertain to the realm of family and personal relations or terms that indicate an organicist conception of cultures that 'grow', 'mature' and 'die' are consistently used in Herder's descriptions of various cultures in both his *Philosophy of the History of Mankind* (1784-1791[1]; 1968) and the "Essay on the Origin of Language" (1772[1]; 1969).

existence, but are also, in turn, shaped by the various individuals of a generation, whose use of their inherited language and thought-mode affects the development of a culture as a whole. Each historical cultural unit then constructs, in its language, a "specific home or family idiom" by which it is, in turn, defined (1772[1]; 1969: 166).

It follows that the history of mankind does not culminate for Herder either in the civil states or in an undifferentiated cosmopolitan society in which a unique philosophy dominates. Instead, what nature prescribes, in his view, is the development of infinite variety upon the earth, in the context of which men and cultures must communicate with each other at an intercultural level and develop among them the bonds of a family – each of them being a unique member of the same human species. Such an "inter-national transmission of social cultures", as he maintained, "is the highest form of cultural development which nature has elected" (ibid.: 174).

Herder's thought was not only directed against the political philosophy of his time. The idea of 'culture' was at the same time targeted against his contemporary European societies, which he criticised for having effaced their own cultures and for oppressing others, thus acting against the natural development of humankind. The main cause of this condition was found by Herder in the distinct traits of bourgeois societies: the development of commerce and industry, the incessant pursuit of profit and the establishment of alienating human relations in the civil sphere. What these conditions entailed, he argued, was that the integrity of European cultures disintegrated and was replaced by antagonistic relations, while Europe became engaged in an enterprise of oppression and exploitation of other cultures. From this perspective, Herder took the slave-trade as his main target, which he condemned in strong terms as the utmost violation of the laws of nature. The "African Negros", he wrote, who are taken as slaves to the West Indies belong to their own unique culture which is not inferior to ours. "The Arab and the Chinese, the Turk and the Persian, the Christian and the Jew, the Negro and the Malay, the Japanese and the Gentoo" are different from each other, but nevertheless remain "completely men" with whom Europeans should "enter into fraternity" instead of oppressing them, murdering them or stealing them from their native countries (1784-1791[1]; 1968: 6-7). But even in Europe, Herder argued, "slavery has been abolished because it has been actually established that slaves are far more costly and far less productive than free men" (1774[1]; 1969: 209). European culture has not progressed according to the directions required by nature. Quite the contrary; when compared to the social culture of man in its earlier and natural stages of development, contemporary Europeans seem to act against nature. For the social culture of man in those earlier stages, it is maintained, "was

characterised by creativeness and action rather than by acquisitiveness and the desire for private possessions." Thus "pride in the former" constituted "a far greater point of honour than the distressing pride in property of latter and more spineless periods" (1772[1]; 1969: 168). Today, Herder states, the only feature that defines the condition of Europe is a "system of trade":

> The magnitude and uniqueness of the enterprise is manifest! Three continents devastated and yet policed by us; we in turn are depopulated, emasculated and debauched as a result. Such is the happy nature of the exchange. Who does not have a hand in this grand European sponging enterprise? *Who does not compete as a trader even of his own children?* The old name 'shepherd' has been changed into 'monopolist': *'Mammon' is the god we all serve!* (1774[1]; 1969: 209, my italics).

In such a condition "national character is no more!". It has been substituted for civil manners and civil society. Within them, it is argued, man has lost its soul and together with it the capacity for genuine human relations. "We love each and everyone, or rather, we can dispense with love; for we simply get on with one another being all equally polite, well mannered and even-tempered". But more than this, what is lost by Europeans is the social unity created by the force of cultures. As is emphatically asserted by Herder:

> We no longer have a fatherland or any kinship feelings; instead we are all philanthropic citizens of the world ... *National cultures where are you*? (ibid.: 209, my italics)

This understanding of cultures as an alternative to the establishment of bourgeois societies underwrote the entire Romantic response to the Enlightenment's conceptions of knowledge, society and subjectivity. The belief that each culture constitutes a unique way of perceiving the world called into question at once the unity of the knowing subject and the universal translatability of true cognitions and judgements. What was at an earlier moment a unified network of signs, was perceived by Herder as an infinite number of different networks, none of which could serve as the place of a universal philosophy and a cosmopolitan history. Translation became thereby a problem, rather than a given, as Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834) suggested in his essay "On the Different Methods of Translating" (1813[1]; 1977). What is more, it became a problem that was assumed to pertain to every aspect of social intercourse and intercultural communication. We not only translate the languages of nations that are far from our own, Schleiermacher wrote, but also the previous phases of our own language, the dialects of various groups within it, and the words of other individuals who have a frame of mind or feeling that is different to ours (ibid.: 68).

Yet the most privileged space for considering the problem of translation was, in Schleiermacher's view, that of communication between different languages and cultures. In the context of this space, he argued, the translator can adopt two distinct and mutually

antithetical methods for bridging the distance between the author of a work and the target readership:

> Either the translator leaves the author in peace, as much as possible, and moves the reader towards him; or he leaves the reader in peace, as much as possible, and moves the author towards him (ibid.: 74).

In the first case, the translator seeks to replace for the reader the understanding of the original language that the reader does not have. He aims to communicate "the same image, the same impression he himself has gained" by his knowledge of the source language. By following this method, the translator seeks to move readers towards the author's point of view "which is essentially foreign to them". In the second case, the translator drags the author directly into the world of the readers and "transforms him into their equal". The author is changed into a participant in the target culture (ibid.: 74). It follows that the first of these methods, which is the one Schleiermacher finally endorses, prioritises the recognition and promotion of cultural plurality, while the second tends to efface it.

But what does the notion of 'translation' mean in this context? Schleiermacher seems particularly concerned with delimiting the field to which these two methods pertain, which is that of "genuine" translation and excludes other forms of linguistic transfer. For, in his view, it is only the genuine translator who faces the problems posited by cultural disparity and lack of equivalence. Outside this field of translation, however, words and concepts are easily found to be equal in their meaning and value (ibid.: 74, 70). What then are the limits of "genuine translation"? At the beginning of the essay, Schleiermacher draws a significant division from which his whole argument on translatability derives: that between the translator and the interpreter. He thus suggests that when we think of the broader domain of translation, "we shall be able to distinguish two different fields ... interpreting and translation":

> The interpreter plies his trade in the field of commerce; the translator proper operates mainly in the fields of art and scholarship (ibid.: 68).

The interpreter is at perfect ease with his task, since in the world of commerce one is generally faced with "obvious objects, or at least with objects defined with the greatest possible precision". Commercial transactions "have an arithmetical or a mathematical character" and therefore "number and measure help out everywhere". Differences among languages are here "unimportant" and "translating in this field is ... a mechanical activity which anyone can perform ... and in which there is little distinction between better and worse as long as the obviously wrong is avoided". This is far from being the case with genuine translation, the translation of products of "art and scholarship". In this context, words in one language do not correspond to words in another, and each concept of the author is embedded in networks of

relations which differ from those relations that define concepts in the target language. Translation therefore ceases to be a mechanical activity and becomes an "endlessly difficult and complex ... problem". For in the domains of art and scholarship it is "thought, which is one with the word", while in the domain of interpreting, it is "the thing of which the word is only a possibly arbitrary but fixed sign [that] dominates to a greater extent" (ibid.: 70-71).

The distinction is so critical – and Schleiermacher explicitly says so (ibid.: 70) – that it is consistently employed throughout his essay and seems to underlie every argument. But how are we to understand the terms translation and interpreting in this context? Obviously Schleiermacher does not merely talk about translation and interpreting in the way we would normally use the terms today. The essay itself ensures that such a reading is prevented. It emphasises that although the opposition drawn may be seen as arbitrary by those who take interpreting to mean what is done orally and translating what is written, one should nevertheless accept it as "conveniently tailored to fit the present need" of the writer to develop his argument. The logic behind it, Schleiermacher explains, is that "writing is appropriate to the fields of art and scholarship, because writing alone gives their work endurance". Interpretation in these fields "would be as useless as it seems impossible". On the other hand, for commerce "writing is but a mechanical means", while "oral bargaining is the original form here, and all written interpreting should really be considered the notation of oral interpreting" (ibid.: 69).

It follows from this position that the distinction does not merely stand for oral and written forms of linguistic transfer. As the repository of scholarly and artistic creation, 'genuine translation' pertains for Schleiermacher to the 'authenticity' of cultures, while interpreting becomes a metonymy for the language of civil society and the commercial relations that develop in it. What is therefore compared in this statement is more than two different forms of rewriting. Instead, Schleiermacher employs a notion of translation in order to illustrate an antithesis between culture, as a natural and historically diversified mode of knowledge, and what he perceives as the flat, universalised and unified thought-mode that characterises human life and relations in the context of modern bourgeois societies.

Progressively the opposition takes a more concrete form, which brings the individual subject of Romanticism to oppose at once the civil world of commerce and the quantifying form of reason which seems to be related to this world. Hence the nature of language that pertains to 'translation proper' is, according to Schleiermacher, "irrational", precisely because words lack direct equivalence when they are used by different speakers. On the contrary, interpreting produces a language which corresponds directly to the objects, since it is

dominated by these objects instead of constituting them (ibid.: 70-71, 73). The use of the term 'irrationality' establishes a crucial point. By describing the language of 'culture' as 'irrational', Schleiermacher does not only attack the employment of reason after Descartes as a means of transcription and measurement; he further relates this reason to modern societies and suggests that such a form of quantifying rationality can only articulate and sustain a world in which commerce and matter ("the thing", as he writes) dominate thought. It is against this condition, which is at once an intellectual and a social one, that Schleiermacher posits the "irrationality" of language and the individuality of perception ensured in the context of cultures.

The distinction becomes clearer when Schleiermacher proposes a further opposition which demarcates the two fields: that between universalisable and individualistic modes of understanding, each of which pertains respectively to lower and higher modes of writing and translating. He suggests that although they appear in a written form, certain categories of translation do not belong to the field of translation proper, but seem to be closer to the act of interpreting (again using the term in a completely different way to its contemporary usage), due to the nature of the source text in question. As Schleiermacher puts it,

> The less the author himself appears in the original, the more he has merely acted as the perceiving organ of an object, and the more he has adhered to the order of space and time, the more the translation depends upon simple interpreting (ibid.: 69).

Hence when one translates "newspaper articles" or "the common literature of travel" then, as a translator, one is so close to interpreting that "he risks becoming ridiculous when his work makes greater claims and one wants to be recognised as an artist". This is not the case when the author's distinct viewpoint is expressed in and dominates the writing of his work. As it is argued,

> the more the author's particular way of seeing and shaping has been dominant in the representation, the more he has followed some freely chosen order, or an order defined by his impression, the more his work is a part of the higher field of art – and the translator, too, must then bring other powers and abilities to bear on his work and be familiar with his author and his author's language in another way than the interpreter is (ibid.: 69).

While all the above oppositions between 'civil society' and 'culture', 'reason' and 'irrationality', 'individual' and 'universal understanding' appear to be politically neutral and to articulate only vague axiological appraisals, Schleiermacher gives a final description of the two terms in question, through which all of the others are, in retrospect, qualified. Genuine translation, he suggests, articulates a discourse of freedom and subjective autonomy, while interpreting pertains to a world which erases thought and oppresses the uniqueness and freedom of subjectivity. Let us follow this point. Schleiermacher acknowledges first that in

the fields of arts and scholarship "every man is in the power of the language he speaks, and all his thinking is a product thereof". Thinking cannot take place "outside the limits of language". On the other hand, it is important not to forget, he argues, that "every *freely thinking, mentally self-employed human being shapes his own language*". For this is precisely the way language develops and "grows from its first raw state to its more perfect elaboration in scholarship and art". This means that it is "the living power of the individual which creates new forms in language" and therefore "each free and higher speech needs to be understood twice, once out of the spirit of language of whose elements it is composed" and once "out of the speaker's emotions, as his action, as produced and explicable only out of his own being" (ibid.: 71, my italics). From this perspective, the work of the translator is located in a field that rises above interpreting. For this is precisely the space in which the freedom of the human mind can be realised and the spirit of the author together with the spirit of language can reach their full development. As Schleiermacher argues,

> The translator rises more and more above the interpreter, until he reaches his proper field, namely those mental products of scholarship and art in which the *free idiosyncratic combinatory powers of the author* and *the spirit of the language* which is the repository of a system of observations and shades of moods *are everything*, in which *the object no longer dominates in any way, but is dominated by thoughts and emotions*, in which indeed, *the object has become object only through speech and is present only in conjunction with speech* (ibid.: 69-70).

Freedom, it is suggested, is realised as the domination of the cultural spirit over worldly matter, the priority of ideas over the objects they are employed to describe. What this statement entails is not only that the realm of culture is the space *par excellence*, within which subjects can attain a political ideal, freedom; it further asserts that this ideal is attainable in a sphere which is constructed as the direct opposition to the Kantian civil utopia. The spirit of language and individuals stands, for Schleiermacher, against the civil and the political world, over which culture, in his view, should dominate.

Despite its obvious idealism, Schleiermacher's position should not be read as a mere evocation of a new kind of philosophical or literary thought, an 'irrational' mode of scholarly or artistic production that is called for in order to replace the Kantian one. The cultural spirit he evokes is, in fact, much closer to social life than Schleiermacher himself would be ready to acknowledge – yet it is close to an aspect of this life that seems to be distinguished from the public sphere: family and personal relations. It is from this point of view that the spirit of art and scholarship is described by him as the product of a "father" and a "mother". As he writes, "if the writer's particular spirit is the *mother* of works belonging to scholarship and art in a higher sense, his national language is the *father*" (ibid.: 85). Against this world stands, in his

view, the field of the market place and, united with this, the field of politics and the language of "courtiers and diplomats". This latter discourse is not characterised by "the sacred seriousness of language". Instead, the discourse of politicians, as Schleiermacher points out, is the product of the effacement of national cultures under the pervasive influence of the market place. This is not the discourse of translation, but that of interpreting:

> as nations appear to mix in our time to a greater extent than they did before, the market-place is everywhere and these [the speeches of courtiers and diplomats] are conversations of the market-place, whether they are social or literary or political, and really do not belong in the translator's domain, but rather in that of the interpreter (ibid.: 83-4).

This statement seems impressively alert to an historical process that was hardly visible in the early nineteenth century, but whose truth can easily be felt in today's context of a global market, within which cultural traits remain only as a means for the promotion of commerce and better functioning of the market itself, rather than being the marks of a distinct and presumably genuine mode of a community's life. Yet at the same time, this statement seems also impressively limited as a proposition of an alternative to the thought-mode and social experience of modern bourgeois societies. For so long as this alternative is dissociated from social life and takes place merely in the mind of individuals and abstractly defined cultural entities, it is bound to appear weak and fragile, unable to counter-balance the force of the market in shaping the civil relations and political organisation of the societies in which it dominates.

Schleiermacher's alternative does not differ from Herder's endorsement of cultural plurality. What becomes, however, clear through his essay is that the glorification of cultural difference endorsed by both writers can be read less as an individualistic and more as a social and political ideal. This position takes concrete form at the end of Schleiermacher's essay on translation, when he concludes that the proper task of the translator is to introduce into his own language the various cultural voices of foreign authors while maintaining their foreignness; to transplant into this language "all the treasures of foreign arts and scholarship" so that the target language "can thrive in all its freshness and completely develop its own power ... through the most manysided contacts with what is foreign" (ibid.: 88). When Schleiermacher describes this process as the product of a specific and new kind of language that pertains only to translation (ibid.: 89) he does not only speak about translation; he proposes a social model which is identical to Herder's conception of the end of history: a language in which an infinite number of individual and cultural viewpoints is collected and united into a great historical whole; and thereby a society which would be free from the ethics

and politics of the market and in which different subjectivities would coexist harmoniously in a broader, family-like unity.

Yet, in contrast with Herder, Schleiermacher raises a final, but highly significant doubt over the power and effectiveness of this ideal. He asserts that up to that moment it seems that translation "has contributed more than a little" to the re-establishment of a stricter style, a genuine language and thought that were lost with the advent of the market. And while up to this point his argument rejects any form of political life and any conception of the knowing subjects as citizens, the essay ends with a wish for a "public life" in which free speech is attained by the orator and in which the translator does not disappear, but is, however, "less needed" for the realisation of human freedom:

> If ever the time should come in which we have a public life out of which develops a sociability of greater merit and truer to language, and in which free space is gained for the talent of the orator, we shall be less in need of translation for the development of language. If only that time might come before we have rounded with dignity the whole circle of difficulties in translation (ibid.: 89)

The orator is a figure that belongs to the public sphere. He does not have a space in the atomistic world presented by the Romantic ideas of 'culture' and 'genuine translation'. His words only make sense in a society in which citizens can listen to opinions and freely deliberate on what is true or false, right or wrong from a position of equality. In such a society the individual subject, the subject as individual does not vanish. Yet the space for the articulation of cognition and judgement is constituted as a public space, as the realm of a society in which participants are not individuals, but equal and autonomous citizens.

CHAPTER 2

ON DEFINING TRANSLATION NORMS: TRANSLATION AS A SOCIALLY SYMBOLIC ACT

Discourses on translation, as was suggested in the previous chapter, do not only talk about translation. They further establish a network of relations between a certain category of translation employed by the target community and the broader historical context within which this category is produced. From this perspective, descriptions and conceptions of translation establish their object by also talking about human history and the history of societies and cultures.

Contemporary methods for translation description do not constitute an exception to this condition. For even those studies which self-consciously focus on the micro-level of textual translation choices, rather than the macro-level of social and cultural relations[61] are sustained by theoretical assumptions – however implicit these may be – that propose links between the two levels, which can, of course, include the suggestion of 'zero' relations, the hypothesis that translation is not affected by the historical conditions of its production. From this point of view, Toury's most significant question as to "what are Descriptive Studies into Translation Likely to Yield apart from Isolated Descriptions?" (1991: 179) already contains an answer within itself: descriptive studies into translation yield a lot more than isolated descriptions, since they do not merely account for singular translation events, but unavoidably suggest ways of perceiving these events in their relation to social and cultural processes, a means for conceptualising and understanding translation as part of a history which includes at once past translators and present readers.

These relations, however, do not simply emerge from the results of empiricist research, although they do depend on our understanding of empirical historical data.[62] For these data, which consist of translation and metatranslation discourses of a certain time, are neither straightforwardly perceptible as, say, a physical object may be considered to be, nor do they immediately indicate their relations to their context, since no text or semiotic unit is

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[61] On the distinction between the micro- and macro-level of translation analysis see Tymoczko 2000.

[62] Although the terms 'empirical' and 'empiricism' are interconnected, they also need to be distinguished from each other. The term 'empirical' denotes an idea or concept that is derived from the senses, but not a method of understanding. On the other hand, 'empiricism' denotes the view and subsequently method of research, which holds that our knowledge is based on experience. The roots of empiricist philosophies are found in the assumption that all we can know about the world is what the world gives us. The significance of this assumption notwithstanding, one can distinguish many kinds of empiricism, not all of which have been equally extreme in their claims. A radical form of empiricism would assume that the mind is a *tabula rasa* on which information is imprinted by the senses. This thesis has been criticised as incoherent, since it supposes that the mind begins from a position of total isolation from the world, without being able to explain how it ever manages to escape from

produced in such forms that would conveniently make evident the links between itself and the historical world of which it was part. Instead the historical meaning and function of translation has to be supposed and reconstituted on the basis of the various critical methods and hypotheses of the present, each of which, as Jameson suggests, may be grasped as an expression of a broader interpretive code in terms of which the cultural object, be it a text, an historical period or culture, is allegorically rewritten. The type of codes in question, as Jameson points out, have been, for example, diverse forms of language or communication in structuralism, desire in some areas of psychoanalytic criticism, anxiety and freedom in existentialist philosophies, temporality in phenomenology, conceptions of human identity in various types of poststructuralist, ethical or meta-ethical criticism and so on (1979[1];1989: 149).[63]

Interpretive codes and the critical methods they evoke are themselves historical constitutions. They develop as the articulation of the convictions, assumptions and interests of a certain time and do not have an immanent validity or significance. Equally contingent and historical are the images of translation and translation production that are constituted by them. For example the employment of the notion of 'divinity' as the power behind the writing of the Septuagint or the use of the idea of an omnipresent order as the force behind the shaping of both languages and the natural world, which were considered, as we saw, to provide sufficient explanations for the production of translation, were believed to constitute the sources of translation choices because they were in accordance with the broader convictions, cultural values, and social organisation and processes of their society and time. Likewise an understanding of translation as the product, say, of individual inspiration, socially determined norms, structural necessities, cultural values, ideological discourses and so on, constitute ways of rewriting translation history, whose very vocabulary and assumptions are also the products of an historical society, and of people or groups within it. It follows that codewords employed in translation theory, such as 'norms', 'polysystem', 'structure', 'translator', are also constituted categories, in the sense that these categories bear the marks of the broader

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there. There is however a wide range of philosophical positions which can be described as empiricist and have taken more moderate positions (Honderich 1995 s.v. 'empirical' and 'empiricism').

[63] The evocation of the notion of 'code' is not suggested as equivalent to the notion of 'concept'. While interpretive codes are constituted by concepts, they are not reducible to them, as they evoke a relatively coherent totality of interrelated concepts and postulates, each part of which is consistent with and complementary of the others. This distinction between 'concept' and 'code' can be grasped when we think of the mutual exclusiveness of interpretive frameworks, the outer limits of which may not be articulated as absolutes, but nevertheless channel understanding within a paradigm into certain directions and prevent, for example, one from arguing at one and the same time that "translation is a norm governed activity" and that "translation is the product of unconnected and indeterminate individual choices". In other words, codes stand metonymically for organised, relatively coherent networks of interpretive hypotheses in relation to which their significance and methodological function are determined.

convictions and values of their particular time and context, which they also affect and transform in the process. It is from this point of view that I shall subsequently discuss the notion of translation norms as it has been employed by a range of contemporary research models, examine the intellectual and historical relation of these models to modern discourses on translation and knowledge, and finally appraise the significance of the notion of norms for the understanding of translation as a social phenomenon and a socially symbolic act.

1. Norms and Social Structures in the Context of Polysystem Theory

One of the most consequential hypotheses in historical translation research, namely the supposition of the relative autonomy of translation from the source text, has developed around the idea of 'translation norms'. The concept of 'norms' was introduced into the field of Translation Studies by Toury with the intent of moving the focus of translation studies from the determination of the ideal hypothetical conditions, under which an original text could be perceived and faithfully reproduced by a translator, to the examination of the actual historical factors which shape translations within the context of the target sociocultural system. In his work *In Search of a Theory of Translation* Toury described norms as sociocultural constraints on the translator's activity, which function as the "intermediating factor between the system of potential equivalence relationships and the actual performance, i.e. the reason for the functioning of certain relationships as translation equivalence". Toury further located norms within a continuum limited by two extremes: "general, relatively absolute rules", that is "(more) objective norms" and "pure idiosyncrasies", in other words, "(more) subjective (or: less inter-subjective) norms" (1980:50-51).

There are two interrelated hypotheses in Toury's position, which have deeply influenced the employment of the notion of norms in translation research. The first emphasises the distinctiveness of translation norms and by extension the relative integrity and specificity of the field or system of translation within the context of the target society. This fruitful idea, which derived both inspiration and methodological support from Even-Zohar's polysystem theory, does not merely suggest that translations follow general linguistic and cultural patterns of the target community, that they simply manifest at least that minimum set of rules and conventions that would make any target text comprehensible in its historical context; it rather seeks to account for the specific set of norms that pertain to translation *per se*; i.e. rules which are certainly related to, but are by no means reducible to the broader normative patterns on which the field of cultural, linguistic and literary production of the target community is based. As Toury has argued,

> there is no way that the norms governing translation in their totality (that is, the overall normative model a translation event is subject to) will be identical to the ones operating in any other field, be it even a closely related one. One may of course expect correlations, including partial overlaps but never full identity (1999: 22).

In other words, the concept of translation norms should not be understood as a mere repetition of the Saussurean conception of the normativity and conventionality of linguistic systems,[64] within which translation is constituted, or of the notion of norms as determinants of social action that have been suggested by sociologists[65] or, finally, of twentieth-century attempts to describe literature and 'literariness' by reference to normative linguistic patterns.[66] For while all of these normative systems are related to the writing of translations and could potentially be studied through an analysis of translated texts, they would obviously be more comprehensively illuminated by an investigation of a broader corpus of cultural and social products, which would be the object of linguistics, sociology and literary theory. What Toury's statement suggests, however, is that despite partial overlaps and influences, translations cannot be adequately accounted for as merely one further manifestation of linguistic, literary or social behaviour that is ultimately indistinguishable from others, but that they constitute a specific field of cultural production, formed on the basis of models that are not reducible to other cultural units of the target society.

This suggestion should not be taken to indicate a diminishing of the socially determined character of norms. On the contrary, Toury has consistently sought to point out that norms cannot be understood as the outcomes of individual consciousness or even of the field of translation taken in isolation, but as the products of an organised society, which determines what is right or wrong, adequate or inadequate, permissible or forbidden in a certain behavioural dimension (1995: 54-55). 'Translatorship', as he explains,

> amounts first and foremost to being able to *play a social role*, i.e., to fulfil a function allotted by a community – to the activity, its practitioners and/or their products – in a way which is

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[64] The normative order of language constitutes the basis of Saussure's distinction between language (langue) and speech (parole). As has been argued in the *Course in General Linguistics*, when "taken in its totality, speech is manifold and anomalous ... Language, on the contrary, is a self-contained whole and a principle of classification. Once we give it first place among the facts of speech, we introduce a natural order into an assemblage that is amenable to no other classification" (1916[1]; 1959: 25).

[65] Toury himself uses the work of the American sociologist Jay Jackson in his argument. The notion of norms was initially employed as a heuristic tool in sociology by Talcott Parsons. In *The Structure of Social Action*, first published in 1937, Parsons used the notion of norms in order to explain how the social environment limits and determines the choices and acts of social agents (1937[1]; 1949).

[66] The work of Russian formalists, to which Toury's and Even-Zohar's thought is greatly indebted, constitutes the first attempt at studying the development of literariness in terms of compliance with and deviation from linguistic norms (Cf. Lemon and Reis 1965; Erlich 1955[1];1980). The directions given by Russian formalism were further developed in the context of the Prague School, especially by Jan Mukařovský's work (1936[1]; 1979). For a selection of works of the Prague School see Garvin 1964). For a general account of uses of the idea of norms in philosophy, literature and social theory see Hjort's edition *Rules and Conventions. Literature, Philosophy, Social Theory* (1992).

> deemed appropriate in its own terms of reference. The acquisition of a set of norms for determining the suitability of that kind of behaviour, and for manoeuvring between all the factors which might constrain it, is therefore a prerequisite for becoming a translator within a cultural environment (1995: 53).

Norms are thus described as social products, which are "acquired by the individual during his/her socialization and always imply *sanctions* – actual or potential, negative as well as positive" (1995: 54-55). There is, of course, a possibility that translators may not comply with existing norms, Toury suggests. Hence, while "under normal conditions" they would tend to follow normative models, as they would seek "to avoid negative sanctions on 'improper' behaviour as much as obtain the rewards which go with the proper one", their choices are never totally bound, never fully constrained by a predetermined direction. Or, more accurately, despite the existence and actual force of normative directions, the translator, in Toury's view, is always granted a "freedom of choice" among preconstituted alternatives, since "it is always the translator herself or himself as an autonomous individual, who decides how to behave, be that decision fully conscious or not" (1999: 19).[67]

This account of the way translation norms are learned and followed is completed by an attempt at explaining the constitution of norms as products of "agreements" among the members of a social group, which gradually transform themselves into "conventions" and "behavioural routines". A number of these conventions, Toury argues, acquires, after some time, the status of 'appropriate' and 'valuable' behaviour, and acts as the basis for the constitution of norms, which are then formed "as the translation of general values or ideas shared by a group ... into performance instructions" (1999:13-14; Cf. 1980:51; 1995:55). The reason behind this evolutionary constitution of normative systems lies in the absolutely necessary role norms have in the construction of any conceivable social institution and any conceivable cultural unit. As Toury argues,

> norms are the key concept and focal point in any attempt to account for the social relevance of activities, because their existence, and the wide range of situations they apply to (with the conformity this implies), are the main factors ensuring the establishment and retention of social order. This holds for cultures too, or for any of the systems constituting them, which are, after all, social institutions *ipso facto* (1995: 55; Cf. Toury 1980: 52).

Norms, it is maintained, are historical and social constructs, produced by the diversified agreements of people in the context of historical communities, but nevertheless their existence

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[67] Such deviations from normative models do not automatically invalidate norms (although they can, under certain conditions, create new ones) and cannot themselves be shown to challenge the hypothesis that translations follow socially determined rules, in the framework of which non-normative choices acquire their meaning and cultural function (Toury 1995: 55; Cf. Hermans 1991: 162).

should be considered as necessary for any social community and culture. Thus, no theory which seeks to account for translation as a social and cultural phenomenon can afford to exclude the notion of norms from its theoretical vocabulary.

While norms constitute an essential feature of sociocultural systems, as has been claimed up to this point, their specific development depends on actual decisions of translators in the context of various historical societies. These decisions, according to Toury, should not be considered as directionless and haphazard, wholly dependent on the arbitrary and unforeseeable agreements of individuals. On the contrary, the key to the formation of translation canonicities is not to be found in isolated and seemingly random choices, but rather in the sets of interrelations of norms at a syntagmatic level of analysis, that is to say, the normative *networks* established in the context of the target sociocultural system. For translation, as Toury puts it, "is intrinsically *multi*-dimensional: the manifold phenomena it presents are tightly interwoven and do not allow for easy isolation, not even for methodical purposes". Thus, however natural it may at first appear to perceive norms as particular instances of canonical translation behaviour, translation research "should never get stuck in the blind alley of the 'paradigmatic' phase, which would at best yield lists of 'normemes', or discrete norms". It should rather proceed to a "syntagmatic phase" which entails "the *integration* of normemes pertaining to various problem areas" or domains within a "network of relations", that would ultimately establish a normative structure or model within translation and sociocultural systems (1995: 66-67).

In order to examine the formation of these normative structures, in the context of Toury's theory of norms, it is necessary to discuss the latter in relation to the concept of the literary and cultural polysystem. In the early seventies, Even-Zohar suggested a conception of literature – and by extension of other cultural phenomena – as an internally structured, heterogeneous and stratified whole, a "polysystem", as he termed it, which is dichotomised into "canonised" and "non-canonised" sub-systems.[68] The term 'canonised' was employed in order to define the systems considered as "major literature", that is, "those kinds of literary works accepted by the 'literary milieu' and usually preserved by the community as part of its cultural heritage". In contrast, non-canonised literature was taken to include "those kinds of literary works more often than not rejected by the literary milieu as lacking 'aesthetic value' and relatively quickly forgotten, e.g. detective-fiction, sentimental novels, westerns, pornographic literature etc." A polysystem (of which the translation system is a constitutive

[68] The multidimensional character of the system justifies, according to Even-Zohar, the descriptive accuracy of the term 'polysystem' (1978: 11).

part[69]) is structured on the basis of "hierarchical relations" among the various (sub)systems. This means that some of these systems "maintain a more central position than others, or that some are *primary*, while others are *secondary*". What is more, the relationship between primary (or central) and secondary (or peripheral) systems is, according to Even-Zohar, an "oppositional" one, a relation of conflict and "struggle", through which the canonised systems can "succeed in gaining ground", while the non-canonised ones become marginalized (1978: 15-18).

The hierarchical and internally conflictual structure of polysystems is presented by Even-Zohar as an essential and simultaneously historically manifested trait of literatures and cultures. This means that while all polysystems are assumed to tend towards the development of this structure (for without this internal opposition literary production becomes "petrified" and literature loses its 'literariness'), the classification into canonised and non-canonised systems is made, in his view, "on factual cultural grounds". It stems from an attempt to describe how cultures develop and function in historical reality instead of evaluating whether such divisions are just or unjust by comparison to a "democratic cultural policy"; whether they would have been legitimate in an "ideal welfare state", in the context of which no group or aspect of cultural production "would be discriminated against because of its peculiar taste". On these grounds, Even-Zohar proposes that the oppositions between the various systems "create an ideal literary and cultural balance within the literary polysystem". Hence he defines as "fully-fledged" those polysystems which have fully developed this hierarchical structure (e.g. Russian or English literatures in the nineteenth century), while naming as "defective" the polysystems which 'lack' for a certain period one of the fundamental elements of their structure (e.g. Hebrew literature, which consisted only of a canonised system, while the non-canonised one was either missing or fulfilled by other literatures) (ibid.: 16-17; cf. 1990:16).

This postulate justified Even-Zohar's attempt at formulating a preliminary set of universal "laws of (cultural) interference" (1978: 39-53; 1990:58-72), which were further extended by Toury to the field of translation (1995: 259-279). The notion of universal laws of translation and cross-cultural interference was, I would suggest, the logical outcome of the supposition that a hierarchical and conflictual structure is an essential trait of polysystems, and therefore all 'defective' polysystems would manifest a tendency towards filling in gaps either by 'original' production or by processes of cultural import and transfer.[70] Let us consider, for

[69] On this issue see Even-Zohar (1978: 15).

[70] From this point of view the notion of 'laws' of translation is considered to be an integral part of polysystem theory, rather than a postulate with which the model can dispense without being completely transformed. A different approach to this issue has been suggested by Hermans, who has pointed out that the quest for laws along the lines presented by Toury is at odds with itself, as it implies that "all the variables relevant to translation ... as

example, in order to elaborate this point, Even-Zohar's suggestion that a source literature tends to be selected by the target culture on the grounds of its prestige or dominance. This 'law' makes sense only on the grounds that in the context of 'defective' systems or minority cultures, as Even-Zohar argues, an 'imported' 'prestigious' or 'dominant' literature would function as the 'higher' or 'canonised' system within the target context (1978: 49-50; 1990:66-69). Without the postulate that the target system would tend towards the development of a 'fully-fledged' structure, this law remains unjustifiable and ultimately incomprehensible. Likewise, Even-Zohar's suggestion that interference occurs when a system is "in need of items unavailable within itself" (1978: 50; 1990: 69) also presupposes a conception of a 'fully-fledged' system against which the notion of cultural 'need' is defined. As Even-Zohar puts it, the selection of items for import "is done in accordance with the interests and structure of the target literature. Items are not mechanically transplanted from a SLt to a TLt, but 'needs' determine and guide the selection" (1978: 51-52).

It is precisely this idea which also underwrites Even-Zohar's thesis as regards the position of translation within the target polysystem. For translation, as he argues, would maintain a primary, innovatory role

> a) when the polysystem has not yet been crystallized, that is to say, when a literature is "young," in the process of being established; b) when a literature is either "peripheral" or "weak," or both; and c) when there are turning points, crises, or literary vacuums in a literature" (1978: 24).

The terms 'weak' and 'peripheral', as well as the notion of 'literary vacuum', stem theoretically from the conception of stratified polysystems, which indicates that the reasons behind the functioning of this law at a universal level lies in the presumably universal structure and function of polysystems, rather than the isolated and non-universalisable decisions of different translators or groups of the target culture. It is on these grounds that Toury, who endorses this hypothesis (1995: 272) maintains that translation research can ultimately "transcend the study of norms, which are always limited to one societal group at the time, and move on to the formulation of general laws of translation behaviour", to the

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well as the relations between them can be known" and hence "assumes either that translation is an immanent category, an experiential given, or that its historical and geographical diversity can be gathered and reduced to a common denominator." Both of these assumptions, in Hermans' view, contradict Toury's own starting point that we take translation to be what is conceived as translation in different target cultures instead of reducing the multiple meanings of translation to a common denominator (1999: 92). The critique is valid as regards the descriptive claims of Toury's thesis, but misplaced as regards Toury's approach to the function of translation in the target historical context. Toury has adopted a descriptive approach to the category of translation, that is, the texts assumed to be translations in the context of the target culture, but not to the 'function' of translation within the target context. As far as the latter is concerned he has generally employed precepts which have been developed by polysystem theory (as for example the role of translation in 'filling in gaps' in the target culture) on the basis of which the notion of translation 'laws' does not entail a self-contradiction, but is instead justified.

formation of a theoretical model that would offer the possibility of supplementing exhaustive descriptions and viable explanations with justifiable predictions, based on probabilistic universal laws of translation choices (1995: 69, 267).[71]

From this point of view, the issue at stake is not – or at least not only – whether one can legitimately posit the idea of universal laws of translation, since this idea is sustained by a much more fundamental assumption of polysystem theory: the essentially hierarchical and oppositional structure of polysystems. The question then at stake would rather be whether one could accept this concept of universally hierarchical structures as an *a priori* in order to employ it, subsequently, in the formulation of explanatory hypotheses on cultural transfer and interrelations. But on which grounds can such a claim be accepted or refuted?

Let us first exclude a response to this question that would attempt to criticise polysystem theory on the grounds of a strictly empiricist argument.[72] The concept of systemic structures cannot and was not intended to be identified with a tangible object of translation and cultural analysis. Systems are neither visible nor identifiable, if one attempts a strictly empiricist description of cultural data, which cannot by themselves make present their mutual interrelations, structural divisions and conceptual integrity. Polysystems theory was in fact suggested, as Even-Zohar points out, as an alternative to "the positivistic collection of data, taken *bona fide* on empiricist grounds and analysed on the basis of their material *substance*". It rather proposed the interpretation of these data on the basis of an *hypothetical* set of relations, which could allow "the detection of the laws governing the diversity and complexity of phenomena rather than the registration and classification of these phenomena" (1990:9). Hence an assumption, say, that translations in nineteenth-century Britain constituted a polysystem does not depend, theoretically, on the 'existence' of a concrete material entity that can be described as the referent of the concept of 'polysystem'. This referent is certainly absent as an object in-itself, and yet its absence neither proves nor disproves the objectivity of our assumption, in the same way that if I throw an object from a certain height I would not be justified in thinking that the only forces that make it fall are the ones that correspond to perceptible realities, i.e. my act of throwing, my physical power and the mass of the object

[71] The suggestion that the notion of 'laws' of translation cannot be dissociated from the basic hypotheses of polysystems theory can only serve to explain a number of the laws suggested by Even-Zohar and Gideon Toury, but not all of them, at least not straightforwardly. For example Toury's hypothesis that in translation textual relations obtaining in the original tend to be modified in favour of (more) habitual options offered by target repertoires does not seem to be directly related to the main postulates of polysystem theory. Yet this hypothesis has not been developed in detail, and thus its theoretical basis as well as its relation to Toury's norms-model seems to me unclear at this stage.

[72] Such a critique has been developed by Anthony Pym, who questions both the notion of translation norms and the notion of systems on the grounds that their use necessitates a leap of faith that cannot be sustained by the reality of historical cultures (1998: 110-124).

itself, since a number of forces also exercised on a falling object – such as the law of gravity – are by no means directly perceptible as visible referents.[73] What this example is intended to indicate is not only that notions of systemic integrity, structure or dynamics cannot be denounced by evoking an absence of concrete worldly referents, but also that such hypotheses can make intelligible historical realities which are otherwise unintelligible or invisible to us. For, as Even-Zohar has pointed out, "by hypothesizing a relation as an explanation for an object (an entity, a process etc.) relational thinking can arrive at assuming the "existence" of some phenomena which have not been recognized before" (1997: 15).

Yet these hypotheses do not themselves stand outside historical time. Precepts, assumptions and methods of analysis develop instead as contextualised conceptual categories; as the convictions and thought-modes of a certain social community and particular groups within it. As such, our convictions regarding the nature of cultures and the function of products within them are not so easily universalisable. If the very idea of culture and its immediate corollary, heterogeneity and cultural difference, only emerged as concepts in the late eighteenth-century, and if the notions of high and low cultures, sociocultural antagonism and cultural balance in the form of opposition became the 'natural' features of human life in the same context, one is led to doubt the necessity of these features for all historical and potential social formations. However persistent and firm their historical appearance may seem to be, either in the past or in the present, one is not justified in taking this appearance as a transhistorical one.

The fundamental position of polysystem theory makes an assumption that underwrote the self-consciousness of modernity and, as will be examined, the development of liberal democratic thought within it: that the society which pertains most directly to human nature is a society of unequals, within which antagonism enables 'lower' cultural forms – and subsequently groups – to take the position of 'dominant' ones and 'dominant' forms to be marginalized. From this perspective, the notion of 'systemic structure', as developed in polysystem theory, constructs a conception of literature, culture and society, which is as reminiscent of Kant's and Herder's description of historical communities, as it is consistent

[73] Still, while one cannot define systems as clear-cut objects, one cannot accept them as *a posteriori* invented categories, which only exist in the writings of historians and translation theorists. While hypothetical systemic structures cannot be directly observed in historical societies, their specific nature and function has to be inferred from actual evidence of the culture and life of these societies – in our case, the translated texts. For while the unity of these objects draws on the concepts we use in order to think about them, historical data, including texts, do not so easily lend themselves to infinite and unrestricted readings, at least not without making visible signs of interpretive violations of our object. To give a crude example, while one can conceive of an hypothetical community that does not make a distinction between translations and shopping lists (a possibility which would make us suspicious of a universalisation of this division), it seems harder to propose that shopping lists were an

with the ideals of democratic society that emerged in Western Europe during the nineteenth-century. At this point of convergence lies at once the significance and the theoretical weakness of the polysystem model.

Let us briefly elaborate this issue. Even-Zohar suggests that hierarchies and antagonism must be considered as a necessary feature of all cultures, since a non-stratified society, a society which is devoid of internal tensions and struggle simply does not exist. As he argues,

> the tensions between canonized and non-canonized culture are universal. They are present in every human culture, because a non-stratified human society simply does not exist, not even in Utopia. There is no un-stratified language upon earth, even if the dominant ideology governing the norms of the system does not allow for an explicit consideration of any other than the canonized data. The same holds true for the structure of society and everything involved in that complex phenomenon (1990: 16).

The significance of this thesis lies in its capacity to codify the principle and force under which modern societies formed themselves: the constitution of internal social hierarchies, which were steadily sustained, but also consistently threatened by tension and antagonism. Its weakness lies in its inability to disengage itself from these discourses, in the ease with which the universality of sociocultural inequality and the naturalness of opposition are repeated at a theoretical level as the traits and fate of humanity, rather than the products of a certain society and people.

When Kant posited an antagonistic social community as the end of history, as we saw in the previous chapter, he was as much the product as the codifier and the producer of a social world whose concepts and mode of organisation are not radically different from the structures of contemporary capitalist societies and the discourses evoked to nourish and sustain them. Likewise, Herder's notion of culture and the conception of cultural difference and 'untranslatability' that derived from it, voiced concerns, relations and identities which have by now acquired a global significance, precisely because of the globalisation of a market-oriented society Herder sought to criticise from its very first steps. A political discourse on 'democracy', which developed at the same time crystallised the social and political elements already inherent in these ideas. What this tradition established, as was argued in the first chapter, and remains to be discussed as far as conceptions of 'democracy' are concerned, is the postulate that cultures and societies are 'naturally' classified and 'naturally' in a condition of war, that women and men are destined to live in a balance formed by struggle, sociocultural inequality and power relations.

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integral part of the system of translations in nineteenth-century Britain and also suggest a plausible reading of

To endorse such an assumption and present it as an *a priori* does not only entail a refusal of its historical nature. It further forgets that this postulate was also undermined, called into question and gradually eroded by this tradition. The words which affirmed man's subjection to such a hidden and inevitable plan of nature betrayed their human origin; hierarchical cultures, which pronounced their immanence also made evident their historical constitution; translations which manifested in their formation the signs of antagonism and nourished through their words the belief that non-stratified social worlds cannot exist, also cast doubt on the stability of hierarchical social systems; and finally translation norms which seemed to accord with and sustain the idea that cultures would tend to develop a stratified and conflictual structure, showed themselves to be the products of communities; the outcomes of human thinking and writing within a certain society and history, rather the manifestation of a universal model.

2. Discerning the Subject of Translation

How is it then possible to maintain the basic notions of polysystem theory as a valid conceptual ground for the description of modern cultures and societies – in our case nineteenth-century Britain – without losing sight of the human and historical origin of these normative models in question? The first move towards such an approach would entail the abandonment of the deterministic and teleological assumptions regarding the evolution of societies and cultures, and the evocation of people as the origin of translation and cultural expression. For, as actualisations of historical concepts, norms and practices of translation seem to emerge as the products of human subjects, the work of translators, critics and theorists who are almost intuitively felt to be the evident source of conceptual choices, cultural directions and specific translation decisions. From this point of view a history of translation, as Lefevere (1996), Hermans (1996:26-27) and Pym (1998: 160ff.) among others have argued, would involve first and foremost an understanding of *human* thought and action, a description of "who is doing what for/against whom and why" rather than an exclusive focus on depersonalised systemic forces (Lefevere 1996: 45; Hermans 1999: 118).

This perspective seems to be sustained by a significant number of contemporary models for translation research, which have sought to disengage themselves from the deterministic suppositions of the early version of polysystem theory by drawing attention to the concept of the translating 'subject'. The shared hypothesis of these models could then be summarised in the claim that translations, as Pym has put it, are produced by people, that they

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both translations and shopping lists that is not contradicted by the texts themselves.

are effectively brought into being by translators who are involved in diverse social activities, develop specific thought-modes, have needs, personal interests, inclinations, beliefs and values which shape to a greater or lesser extent their translation writing (1998: 160-172). Translators therefore, it is argued, cannot be described as passive receptors and bearers of systemic functions, but should be seen as active social agents, who are diversely involved in the shaping of conceptions, rules and practices of translation within the target cultural context (Hermans 1996: 26-29; Pym 1998: 157).

Their shared assumptions notwithstanding, conceptions of the translator's subjectivity and agency are diverse enough to prohibit any consideration of them as a unified theoretical position. Hence the following discussion will treat them as forming two different groups, each of which enunciates a relatively distinct approach to translation history and is methodologically exclusive of the other. The key term for this division would be the notion of 'mediation': the supposition of a link between the formation of subjective consciousness and the broader social discourses of the target community, which derives from the hypothesis that, while the connection between individual thought-modes and social knowledge is undeniable, the latter, that is social knowledge, is by no means reducible to the former, that is, an aggregation of individual modes of conception. It then seems that the first of these groups is predominantly defined by the absence of such a supposition, which is evident in the assumption of a functional homology between individual and collective thought-modes, the assertion of an essential accordance between the discourse of the translator and that of broader social units. Conversely, the second of these groups perceives of a categorical difference between translators as individuals and the social communities to which these translators belong, and thus necessitates the supposition of a mediating link, which would allow each of these categories to maintain its identity while simultaneously being transformable into the other.

2.1 The Translator as Agent

The obvious candidate for the first group would then be atomistic accounts of translation writing, approaches which seek to interpret specific translation choices on the basis of personal beliefs and interests (as these are expressed in translations themselves as well as 'paratexts', such as introductions, footnotes, commentaries), historical facts which are seen as significant for the practice of individual translators, and, in short, every recorded aspect of a personal history that may be taken to illuminate or explain specific translation decisions. It is important to clarify that such an approach is not predominantly characterised by a reluctance

to refer to social issues and events or to conceive of translators as both individuals and collectives, if only because it is not possible to describe a personal history without referring to institutional frameworks and cultural communities, within which individuals make sense of their identities, or without considering social discourses and conditions, in relation to which they formulate their beliefs, values and interests. The crucial assumption that justifies the characterisation 'atomistic' lies in the attribution of theoretical and methodological primacy to individuals, the supposition that in order to account for the shaping of translation practice in a given historical context it is both adequate and sufficient to account for the causal role of the translator's personal thought and action, from which, it is presumed, social and cultural tendencies are effectively formed.

An exemplary elaboration of this thesis is found in Pym's definition of translators as the "efficient cause" of translations, as the ultimate and necessary force behind the actualisation of all other causes: material presuppositions, such as the actual transfer of a text (material cause), the purpose and utility of translation (final cause), and the historical norms, or conceptions of translation, which allow a text to be accepted as a translation by the client, readership or other translators (formal cause) (1998: 148-159).[74] This position should not be read as a retreat merely to biographical accounts of a producing subjectivity. As a theorist, Pym can hardly be seen as someone who ignores social and cultural groups which lie beyond personal will, interests or consciousness. On the contrary; he is eager to emphasise that every description of translation history must consider both individuals and collectives, and account for the multiple participation (or will for participation) of the subject-translator in various and possibly oppositional cultural groups, defined by nationality, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation and so on.[75] Yet the mechanism for the formation and reproduction of these groups – and the social discourses which define them – brings us, in Pym's view, back to the will, choices and interaction of 'people' rather than the function of impersonal cultural forces. In other words, it is not people who are produced by cultures, but cultures, as well as translations, which are produced by the will and interests of the people. This thesis, which is most tellingly put forward in Pym's analysis of historical case studies,[76] is theoretically

[74] Pym attributes these four causes of translation to Aristotle's distinction of causes in *Metaphysics* I, 3 (Cf. Pym 1998:148).

[75] Hence when for example Pym examines the case of Henri Albert's translation of Nietzsche into French, at the turn of the nineteenth century, he points out a number of 'translation-causes' related to Albert's personal beliefs, interests and history (his homosexual relationship and possible misogyny, his social and literary ambitions, his national consciousness) for each one of which, he finally asserts, "there is a wider, social mode of causation that enables or accepts inner factors to leave their mark in the public world of translations" (1998: 171).

[76] Pym's analysis of Albert's case is indicative, in the sense that it begins with biographical and personal elements and proceeds by drawing a parallel between these elements and the broader sociocultural tendencies of the target

articulated in a radical dispute over "traditional models of translation", which "take as their minimal link the movement from a source culture to a translator to a target culture, no matter which side the translator is presumed to be on". It is thus argued that both source- and target-oriented approaches to translation conceive of the translator as the participant in and the basic link between cultures, as in the scheme "Culture 1, Tr. Culture 2". Yet if "the translator's position is considered primary", Pym suggests, "we can formulate an alternative basic link": "Tr1, Culture, Tr2 ... This means that instead of starting and ending with cultures, the basic link pertinent to translation history could start and end with translators" (1998: 189-190). It is this final thesis that ultimately allows a criticism of the notion of 'culture' as an *a priori*, and the suggestion that we examine translators as working at the intersections of different cultures, at an intercultural space,[77] which is defined by a multiplicity of subjectivities, and precedes, at least in methodological terms, "monocultures" (1998: 177-8, 190-2).

The logic of this position, as it is set up against deterministic readings of translation history, usefully reminds us that translations, as all forms of human activity, would have been unrealisable unless they were actually brought into being by active agents, by the transforming consciousness and practice of human subjects. Without this consciousness and practice, as they are articulated in acts of perception, knowledge and cultural production, there would have existed no culture or social reality, and in a certain sense no humanity either. From this point of view, the specificity of historical translations – in our case of translations of 'democracy' – was indeed the product of active subjects, whose unique histories determined their ability to translate, their belief as to what is translation, their interest in it, their perception of the Athenian democracy, their ideas on equivalence and so on.

But just what were these subjects? What do we mean when we evoke "people as people" at the origin of translation production? What is the category of 'individual' or 'collective subject' (whereas 'collective' indicates, from Pym's standpoint, no qualitative difference from 'individual') on which conceptions and practices of translation or the reality of 'intercultures' so evidently seem to depend? And 'who' is thinking and speaking when we speak of the subject? These questions, it seems to me, cannot be answered (they can indeed hardly be asked) from a position which asserts the historical primacy of subjectivity, not least because any answer to them would evoke an aporia: subjects would be considered as both the

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community, which are therefore taken to derive from individual beliefs, conceptions and histories (Cf. Pym 1998: 167-172).

[77] The notion of 'intercultures' poses problems whose discussion falls beyond the scope of this work. Suffice to mention, at this point, that, despite its claims to constitute a theoretical alternative to the notion of 'cultures', the idea of translators working at the borders and intersections of (heterogeneous) cultural units continues to incorporate and depend on those conceptions of translation it seeks to reject, since the very definition of 'intercultures' presupposes the notion of culture(s).

irreducible cause and the product of themselves; the ultimate origin and simultaneously the outcome of their subjectivity. Yet if we bracket, for the moment, the truth of this thesis (or at least its truth in our own tradition of thought) and question the naturalness of the category of 'people', of translators as 'people', our scope of research is also transformed, as we can no longer think of the subject as the end of our enquiry, but only as one point in a still indefinable chain, a cause which cannot be ultimate, because it is also a result; and yet a 'cause' which has historically *become*, or become to be seen, as final and non-reducible. From this point of view, the 'translator' as a subject and agent becomes a constructed category, a concept which is no less produced to be (seen as) the origin of historical cultures, than it is productive of the cultures and societies which, in turn, define her.

What is more, the 'subject' is a category whose roots can be located with relative precision at the beginning of modernity and whose nature was never seen as secure and stable by the thinkers who codified it as it may appear in its contemporary uses. Kant could conceive of 'man' as an originating 'subject', on the condition that the freedom of this subject to create and produce derived from its prior subjection. This move, as was suggested in the previous chapter, was not merely the outcome of a twisted philosophical logic, which had not yet been dissociated from the burden of religious tradition. What Kant's essay on universal history indicated, maybe despite Kant himself, was that the dual position of the subject acted to articulate a *social* subjectivity, which was itself rewritten and codified in the concept of the modern subject. Furthermore, Kant's text showed that the assumed sovereignty of this subjectivity, man's capacity to consider himself as the ultimate origin and cause of the order of things, developed as an ideological construct; a discourse which served to sustain a socially stratified and antagonistic society, within which subjective freedom and autonomy vanished. Likewise, the Romantic glorification of the individual subject and of cultures *qua* subjects was complemented by a minute, but decisive acknowledgement: that the creative subject can only find a place in a social context of equality and political autonomy, which was neither Schleiermacher's nor ours. From this point of view, to repeat today a conception of subjectivity, of the translator *qua* subject, as the ultimate origin of translation and cultural production, does not only seem to be a theoretical anachronism; it constitutes a thesis which repeats an ideological position of modern discourses, while failing to recognise and incorporate those aspects of these discourses which have provided the means to grasp and criticise their ideological nature.

2.2 Translation in Communication Structures

The notion of the translating subject acquires a different meaning in models for translation research, which have developed an increased attentiveness to the circular, mutually constitutive relation between translators and sociocultural communities. In the context of these models, the notions of 'conventions', 'norms' and 'rules', which unavoidably grew weak in individualistic theories of translation history, occupy a significant – although varied – position, and are employed, as Hermans points out, in order to refer to observable regularities in cultural behaviour as well as the underlying mechanisms that account for the occurrence of these regularities. In the second sense, 'norms',[78] 'rules' and 'conventions' are considered to provide the connection between individual translators and social communities, to "mediate between the individual and the collective, between the individual's intentions, choices and actions, and collectively held beliefs, values and preferences" (1999: 80). While these notions appear to echo the conviction expressed in the earlier phase of polysystem model that norms function as directives and 'constraints' on the translators' activity, but are not effectively determined by them (as they derive from internal systemic tendencies which are merely carried out by people[79]), they are in several ways distanced from it. For norms, in this context, are not seen as merely the outcome of systemic functions and necessities (although cultural systems are granted a relative autonomy and ability for self-reproduction), but as the product of intersubjective communication and social interaction. They are both a human and a 'non-human' (that is, discursive and communicative) construct. Such a conception of norms can be found in two interconnected and mutually complementary models of cultural and translation research, one developed by Even-Zohar and Toury as a revision of polysystems theory (Even-Zohar 1997; Toury 1999) and the other suggested by Hermans (1996; 1996a; 1997; 1999).

According to Hermans, "translation, like any other use of language, is a matter of communication, i.e. a form of social behaviour, which requires a degree of interaction, of co-operation, among those involved". Conventions and norms arise as answers to problems of the interpersonal co-ordination required for communication to take place, in the sense that "they restrict the number of practically available options in recurrent situations of a given type by offering a particular option as the one known to be preferred by everyone involved" or, in the

[78] For the sake of brevity I shall occasionally use the term 'norms' in order to refer to the whole range of canonicities from conventions to rules and decrees. This choice does not imply a dispute of the differences among them, but nevertheless indicates that I consider these differences as quantitative rather than qualitative, in the sense that in each of these categories (including conventions) one finds a (degree of) social obligation, the expression of a stronger or weaker social rule. A detailed codification and description of the meaning and interrelations of 'conventions', 'norms', 'rules' and 'decrees' can be found in Hermans 1996.

[79] People in this sense do not act as the cause of translation norms, but as the means for the actualisation of systemic functions and tendencies.

case of norms, by establishing an option as 'proper', 'correct' or 'appropriate' (1997: 7-8; Cf. Hermans 1996: 29; 1999: 80-81). That is to say, if translation-conventions prove to be effective for the purposes of communication for long enough, they acquire a relative stability and form a 'horizon of normative expectations', a matrix of prescriptions, through which people learn to understand and practise translation within a given social context. So the "content" of norms is formed, Hermans suggests, as the "intersubjective sense of what is correct", of the course of action that should be adopted by the members of a community in a given situation (1997: 13-14; 1996: 31; 1999: 82, 142). The establishment of this content as (relatively) stabilised is considered to be a precondition for the conception and practice of translation. As it is argued,

> we can translate because there are translations which we recognize as translations *and* because, when we translate or speak about translation, we routinely take account of the conditioning factors governing the concepts and practices which count as 'translation' in our world (1999: 142).

The crucial point in this suggestion is that our individual ability to understand translation is not 'inhibited', but is actually formed and sustained by a system of norms, in the sense that outside this system we lack a conceptual framework, through which we can realise what translation is and how it can be practised.[80] In other words the constitution of the translator's 'personal' cognitive potential, her capacity for choice, affirmation as well as negation of existing normative structures is fundamentally shaped by norms, without which this capacity is unrealisable as the translating subject lacks a conception of its/an object.

This hypothesis does not imply, according to Hermans, that normative structures are independent of the beliefs, will and intentions of translators. As he points out, considering the conception and practice of translation as constituted by socially defined modes of cognition and judgement, shared expectations and historical contingency as well as personal selection among a multiplicity of conflicting alternatives enables us to bring into focus not only the institutionalised aspect of translation, but also the human agents who talk about and practise translation, take up positions within existing socio-political structures, negotiate social imperatives according to their needs, goals and interests, and may choose to confirm or challenge already existing normative models (1997: 10-11). What is nevertheless implied – and this is a point that distances Hermans' from Pym's description of agency – is that despite their ultimately human origin, social systems, including the system of translation, are not reducible to individualities, in the sense that their generation and mechanisms for self-

reproduction indicate that their constitutive elements are not simply 'people', but people as social beings (i.e. people interacting within a network of sociocultural relations, institutions, social structures, political forces), who can determine translation and cultural norms only on the condition that they are themselves co-determined by their acts of cognition and judgement.

It would then follow that, in order to describe the production of translation of a certain community, we should account, on the one hand for the contextual identity of these subjects and, on the other hand, for the socio-semiotic and historical conditions, within which conceptions and acts of translation are collectively determined. The first step in such an attempt would be to delineate the categories of social factors, which are involved in this production, to seek to describe the target sociocultural and translation fields 'in situation', and thus conceive of subjectivities and translation practices as integral parts of a broader context, which is inscribed in them as much as it is produced and transformed by the translators' thought and action.

A theoretical framework which provides precisely a means for the determination of these categories, while simultaneously emphasising their communicative, intersubjective constitution, has been suggested by Even-Zohar's revision of polysystem theory, as developed in a number of articles written since 1997.[81] The revised version of polysystem model takes as its methodological starting point Roman Jakobson's communication model and adapts it for the "analysis of cultural events in general". Thus, Even-Zohar suggests the following scheme for the structuring of factors involved with "any socio-semiotic (cultural) event", including translations:

Institution[82]

Repertoire[83]

Producer[84] Consumer[85]

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[80] This suggestion seeks to emphasise the social character of *all* concepts by which we make sense of translation (as both a category and a practice), without however excluding the possibility of the functioning of translation norms as explicit impositions, as for example in the case of censorship.

[81] Cf. Even-Zohar 1997; 1998. As Even-Zohar has emphasised, the revised version of polysystem theory should not be taken to constitute a radical break in his thought, in the sense that the majority of concepts employed by him during the last years ('repertoire', 'market' etc) had already been introduced into polysystems theory – or were implicit in it – since earlier stages of the model (1998: 363). Yet it seems that these concepts are used in Even-Zohar's later writings in order to sustain a theoretical framework which differs in many ways from previous models of polysystems theory, or at least introduces some significant innovations, as José Lambert points out (1998): an increased emphasis on the interrelations of cultural production to social conditions, institutions and agency as well as a gradual abandonment of the opposition between 'fully-fledged' and 'defective' polysystem, and the subsequent attempt at historicising oppositions between canonised and non-canonised cultural subsystems.

[82] "The 'institution' consists of the aggregate of factors involved with the control of culture. It is the institution which governs the norms, sanctioning some and rejecting others. It also remunerates and reprimands producers and agents" (Even-Zohar 1997: 31).

Market[86]

Product[87]

The employment of a communication model for the purposes of socio-cultural analysis is not, strictly speaking, identical to the suggestion that cultures consist of communication systems, but nevertheless indicates that the relationships between the factors implicated in the production and reception of cultural works can be viewed along the lines of verbal, communicative acts; that the constitutive elements of cultures are conceived of and actualised in a context of socio-semiotic relations, whose structure can be seen as parallel to or, in a sense, identical to the structure of (verbal) communication.[88] This idea initially indicates that each of these factors should be recognised as dependent on and simultaneously constitutive of all the others. As Even-Zohar suggests "none of the factors enumerated can be described to function in isolation, and the kind of relations that may be detected run across all possible axes of the scheme (1997: 20). Most significantly though for the purposes of our analysis, this hypothesis draws attention to the existence of a *medium*, through which 'producers', 'consumers', 'institutions', 'repertoires', 'markets' and 'products' interact and 'communicate'; a 'code' which makes possible the interconnection of seemingly fragmented entities and thus allows us to perceive them as an "assumed historical totality" (ibid.: 18)

This 'code' is designated, in Even-Zohar's scheme, by the notion of 'repertoire', which corresponds to the semiotic term 'code' employed by Jakobson, in order to indicate both the means for and a constitutive element of verbal communication.[89] 'Repertoire' then plays a dual role in this context: on the one hand, it is considered to function as one of the factors which condition the shaping of cultural production, and, on the other hand, as the means that

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[83] "'Repertoire' designates the aggregate of rules and materials which govern both the *making* and the *handling*, or production and consumption of any given product (Even-Zohar 1997: 20).

[84] "A 'producer', an actor, is an individual who produces, by actively operating a repertoire, either repetitively producible or 'new' products" (Even-Zohar 1997: 30).

[85] "A 'consumer is an individual' who handles an already made product by passively operating a repertoire. 'To passively operate' basically means to identify relations (connections) between the product and one's knowledge of a repertoire" (Even-Zohar 1997: 31).

[86] "The 'market' is the aggregate of factors involved with the selling and buying of the repertoire of culture, i.e. with the promotion of types of consumption (Even-Zohar 1997: 33).

[87] "By 'product'", Even-Zohar writes, "I mean any performed set of signs and/or materials, i.e., including a given behavior. Thus, any outcome of any action, or activity, can be considered 'a product,' whatever its ontological manifestation may be, be it a semiotic or a physical 'object:' an utterance, a text, an artifact, an edifice, an 'image,' or an 'event.' In other terms, the product, the item negotiated and handled between the participating factors in a culture, is the concrete instance of culture" (Even-Zohar 1997: 27).

[88] This suggestion accords with Even-Zohar's presentation of Jakobson's conception of the verbal act as *intrinsically* related to social and cultural conditions and his consequent claim that the study of language should not be seen as parallel to the study of 'pragmatic' and social conditions of the communication event, but as already including both awareness and consideration of these conditions (Even-Zohar 1997: 20).

[89] As Even-Zohar points out the communicational term adopted by Jakobson, i.e. code, could have perfectly served as a substitute for the notion of repertoire were it not for existing traditions for which a 'code' applies to 'rules' only, not to 'materials' ('elements,' items,' i.e., 'stock' or 'lexicon') (1997: 20).

enables the conception, interrelation and co-determination of all of the above factors (including itself). For the 'repertoire', or more accurately the various 'repertoires' of a socio-semiotic system,[90] are assumed to provide the range of 'models'[91] which are necessary for producers and consumers in order to 'create' and 'interpret' (i.e. decipher, understand) cultural products, for institutions in order to judge and control existing cultural rules or constitute new ones, and for the market in order to produce and implement types of consumption (ibid.: 20-33). From this point of view Even-Zohar also designates the relationship between the social production of repertoires and the action of human agents as reciprocal. Repertoires, he argues, are "conceived of as spontaneous creations of 'society'" and, in certain historical cases, as "the *deliberate* action of individuals", while simultaneously being the means for "creating a 'sense of self,' or 'collective identity'" of people; for establishing the relations between 'individuals' and 'objects'; and for determining the range of alternative options through which individuals shape cultural production (ibid.: 26-28).[92]

Now I have to admit that while I find Hermans' and Even-Zohar's communicative approaches to translation production (which I understand as mutually complementary for the purposes of my work[93]) to be more persuasive and, in a sense, more justified than previous suppositions of polysystem theory, the results of my historical research, as will become clear in the next chapters, *also* appear to confirm Even-Zohar's early theoretical suggestions regarding the structure of polysystems. For both conceptions of translatability and the norms governing the import and practice of translations of 'democracy' in the context of nineteenth-century Britain acted to reinforce, each one from a different perspective, a belief in the inevitability of socio-cultural divisions and hierarchies, at the very moment they further established the essential contestability of social subjects and discourses positioned within their structures.

It then seems to me that while there is ostensibly no incompatibility between the idea that the British polysystem was shaped intersubjectively, co-operatively, and the supposition that this polysystem developed a stratified sociocultural structure, the co-articulation of the

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[90] Even-Zohar emphasises that due to the heterogeneity of sociosemiotic systems, there is never a situation where only one repertoire may function for each possible set of circumstances in a society. Conversely, "different options constitute competing and conflicting repertoires" (1997: 21)

[91] "Analytically, models are the combination of *elements* + *rules* + the *syntagmatic* ('temporal') *relations* imposable on the product. If the case in question is an 'event,' then the 'model' means 'the elements + rules applicable to the given type of event + the potential relations which may be implemented during actual performance" (Even-Zohar 1997: 22-23).

[92] A similar point has been suggested by Toury in relation to the translator's potential to choose among a range of predetermined norms (1999: 19).

[93] By describing these models as 'mutually complementary' I refer to the fact that Hermans analyses at great length the communicative and intersubjective *nature* of cultural systems, while Even-Zohar offers a detailed definition and structuring of the *factors* of which these systems consist.

two claims brings to light an aporetic proposition. That is to say, if we define norms in terms of sociocultural co-ordination and communication, and thus disengage our analysis from all suppositions of historical determinism, how can we account for the fact that participants in the British polysystem tended to co-ordinate their action and shape their thought-modes in a way that would establish these particular structural features? In other words, how can we account for the fact that all factors involved in the production of translation in the context in question co-determined a repertoire, which acted in turn to enable institutions, producers, consumers, and cultural writings to synchronise their function towards the creation of the specific socio-semiotic conditions among a presumably unlimited number of potential alternatives?[94] The same question can be put in more general terms: how can we accommodate in the same historiographic discourse a total rejection of polysystem's determinism *and* the presentation of such an orderly development of repertoires, institutions and translation norms; a mode of signification and practice which appears as if it had been drafted in advance by an invisible historical necessity (only discernible in retrospect); a cause that not only made intentional acts and cultural events cohere in time and space, but also incorporated historical 'accidents' and 'chances', the totality of which appears now as the actualisation of a preconceived story, a 'plan', whose 'logic' and 'intentions' evolved as already beyond the 'logic' and 'intentions' of people? We could, of course, attribute this 'order' to the systemic traits and function of an intersubjective social discourse, which is, as has been indicated by both Hermans and Even-Zohar, essentially capable of maintaining and reproducing itself. Yet the question remains: why does this discourse appear as if every aspect and part of it tended towards the establishment of a particular system, a system of self-contested inequality, instead of doing otherwise?

3. Translation, Social Consensus and Ideology

The conception of repertoires as "spontaneous creations of 'society'" (Even-Zohar 1997: 26) cannot possibly provide an answer to these questions, not because such a postulate is fundamentally wrong (since all conceivable societies would indeed establish a canonisation of their cultural production), but because it lacks both the specificity and the generalising power that would enable us to account for the concrete historical manifestations of this spontaneous tendency: specificity in order to illuminate the conditions, which brought into being particular formations of repertoires in certain historical communities, and generalising power in order to

[94] The same issue emerges when we enquire into the reasons for the historical transition from one sociosemiotic system into another.

position these formations in the context of a range of potential alternatives, possibilities that were excluded, suppressed or marginalized. To say that 'cultures' are 'spontaneously' created by social communities indicates an essential trait, a distinctive feature of human societies, but does not account either for the diversity of modes by which these cultures are organised or for the historical mechanisms and processes by which one form of organisation evolves and gets to be chosen instead of another.

The alternative suggestion, that normative expectations grow out of conventions, when the latter have been agreed upon and judged to be effective for long enough by the participants in (social) communication processes (Hermans 1996: 31; 1997: 8-9; Cf. Toury 1999: 13-14) is more concrete, and thus directs us to see a reason behind the constitution of norms: the need of every society to create a minimum space for 'agreement' among its members, and provide thereby effective solutions to problems in the fulfilment of communal needs, interests and purposes. Yet the moment we attribute norms to a collective conception of effectiveness, we also presuppose an understanding of human communities as predominantly purposeful rather than social categories. We suggest that the members of a community must see some measure of joint action towards a minimally shared purpose as being in their interests – allowing of course for the possibility that in diversified societies subjects may have one or various collective purposes and, in the second case, the possibility that these purposes may not be fully compatible with one another (Swanson 1992: 177, 182) – and at the same time that this conception of minimum compatibility of purpose is a definitive feature of a group *qua* community.[95] That this perspective presents social communities as predominantly 'purposeful' categories and is therefore reductive of the meaning of the 'social' is suggested on the grounds that historical societies – in our case nineteenth-century Britain – may well consist of groups whose interests are not merely diverse and still minimally communal, but diametrically oppositional and antagonistic; in which case norms cannot be taken to be the outcome of coordination, unless we expand the notion to such an extent that it includes all forms of social relations, say from coercion to ideological imposition. Instead, norms in such a context develop as the outcome of social conflict and its historical resolutions.[96] For, unless we hypothesise the existence of conflict and antagonism, it seems that it is impossible to

[95] This conception of society is not without support in the field of social and political theory. Guy E. Swanson, whose work gives an illuminating presentation of this thesis, has defined society in similar terms, arguing that "a group is different from an aggregation of people in being a collectivity – some people trying to do something together – and in these peoples' having some arrangements for taking coordinated action in matters of common interest" (1992: 179).

[96] This suggestion does not claim that conflict *is* an essential feature of every conceivable human society – quite the contrary – but that it *has been* the historical trait of the social organisation in question, i.e. nineteenth-century

explain why a social community would prioritise as 'effective' a matrix of norms, which legitimises the division of people into enlightened subjects and the populace, and its cultural products into central and peripheral, 'high' and 'low', when such divisions cannot be seen as serving the interests (and subsequent purposes) of all members of this community, i.e. all participants in (social) communication processes.

It may be argued, against this position, that translations of ancient Greek texts are not to be considered as an expression of *the* repertoire of British society, but of only *one* repertoire (or network of norms) among others; yet one which has been appropriated by institutional forces and dominant groups, and has thereby been established as a 'canonical' mode of cultural production (Cf. Even-Zohar 1997: 27). That such an answer cannot adequately explain the formation of the range of norms and practices in question can be shown if we think of the mediating role of 'repertoire' for socio-cultural systems, and thus its function as the very means for the formation of sociocultural identities and the structural positions of 'high' and 'low' cultural products and groups. This implies that conditions of domination are not defined by non-significatory processes that lie outside or beyond repertoires, but are conceived of, negotiated and consolidated through them. They are "inscribed", as Hermans argues, "in all the multiple networks of norms and conventions" (1999: 82), which posit 'true', 'appropriate', 'ethical' and 'sanctioned' ways of doing things, of working, consuming and producing, following laws, defining subjectivities and experiencing social structures and relations throughout the entire social body. It follows that, in order to function as a means for the imposition of sociocultural inequality and relations of domination, a repertoire is not merely *given* a dominant position, but itself produces the distinction between 'dominant' and 'dominated', in a way that this distinction would be recognised as legitimate by both ruling and subaltern groups. In our case, translations of classical Greek texts were not only related to the cultural production of dominant social groups; they further articulated the validity of social distinctions and cultural hierarchies by their very wording, by norm-governed and norm-producing translation choices, which thereby expressed the features of both ruling and subordinated consciousness and cultural practice. This argument does not seek to imply that cultural production is identified with dominant discourses, but to emphasise that, at least in modern bourgeois societies, a dominant repertoire has to elicit a degree of acceptance from dominated groups in order to secure and legitimise its domination. It has to establish its hegemonic status throughout society as a whole and thus be somewhat co-produced by diversified and mutually opposed social voices.

Britain, and by extension of the social communities that have developed similar sociocultural structures and

This point is precisely developed by Antonio Gramsci's concept of 'hegemony', which is defined as the establishment of an intellectual, moral, social and political order which is not only materialised by formulating directives, but by creating at the same time the instruments by which the directives themselves will be 'imposed' and by which their execution will be verified (1929-35[1]; 1971: 266). Hegemony then, as Eagleton explains, implies for Gramsci the diffusion of a worldview which is particular to a group or class throughout the entire fabric of society, thus equating this group's interests and purposes with the interests of society at large (1991: 116). This process, which pertains, according to Gramsci, to the hierarchical social organisation of bourgeois societies, functions as a means for legitimising conceptions of 'appropriateness' that fulfil the interests of dominant social groups, while simultaneously acting against the interests of others, so that each individual can govern himself in accordance with these conceptions, without his self-government entering into conflict with the function of political society, but rather becoming its normal continuation, its organic complement (1929-35[1]; 1971: 268). From this point of view, hegemony should be understood as denoting a very specific form of 'consensus', which is *also* an act of imposition and violence, a kind of cooperation which emerges precisely because of the impossibility of cooperative relations, as a means of reconceptualising social conflict and antagonism and transforming them into agreement and coordination.[97]

Yet the most important objection to an argument which suggests the origin of norms in antagonistic social relations, in the context of which co-operation and consensus could only emerge as the expression of ideological forces, lies in the necessity of establishing a criterion by which the 'reality' of needs and interests of social agents would be defined. For if we assert that a range of translation norms served the interests of a specific social group and acted against the interests of others (as I seek to suggest at this point), while the very existence of these norms indicates an ostensible social accordance, an apparent condition of peace out of which conceptions of translation 'rightness' *did* come into historical being, we make the assumption that *we* are in a position to understand and appraise what the 'real' needs of these different groups were, while implying, by the same move, that these groups were unable to conceptualise and pursue them. But where could the criterion for this judgement be found? How can one contend that it is not in the nature of human societies to evolve on the basis of conflict, that it is not beneficial for an entire community to establish a condition in which

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modes of organisation.

[97] As Perry Anderson has argued, there is a relative inconsistency in Gramsci's conception of 'hegemony', which is sometimes used to mean consent rather than coercion, while at different points is employed as a synthesis of both. Anderson argues for the latter reading and suggests that Gramsci's relative lack of emphasis on the coercive aspect of hegemony relates, among other things, to the practical conditions of prison-censorship (1976a: 49).

competition enables excellence to be recognised and the 'less qualified' members of the community to benefit from obeying it?[98] And, in the last instance, how securely can one distinguish a discourse that claims to illuminate the ideological violence of history from the thought-modes that are posited against it as authoritarian and oppressive, as seeking to legitimise a world-perception that does not emerge communicatively and cooperatively, but is somewhat 'imposed' on social groups, as the 'truth' of the subject who knows? In short, how securely can one distinguish between an 'ideological' and a 'critical' consciousness? Admittedly, not very. For so long as our 'objective' account of human needs is not reduced to an inadequate repetition of the traits of living entities (breathing, eating and reproducing themselves)[99] its assertions would unavoidably rely on a conception of human nature and society that would evoke a universal validity. Its claims would assume a possession of 'truth' that would be oblivious of its own contingency; a truth which the subjects of history presumably lacked. But is not this critical move that effectively marks our disengagement from ideology, precisely the same move which brings our contemplation back into it? Is not an assumed "awareness of ideology", as Linda Hutcheon has written, "as much an ideological stand as common-sense lack of awareness of it"? (1988: 180).

The paradox that is inscribed in every critique of ideology,[100] which makes "the stepping out of (what we experience as) ideology the very form of our enslavement to it" (Žižek 1994a: 6), has an objective historical status, which can neither be ignored nor exaggerated. To believe that a personal consciousness can overcome its contingency and posit itself against ideological discourses is to ignore the roots of this consciousness in a thought-mode that has precluded in advance the certainty of truth-claims both philosophically and politically. It is to forget the embeddedness of consciousness in a society, which declared itself to be the source of its knowledge at the cost of negating the articulation of incontestable cognitions and judgements. But more than this, it is to forget that in the context of contemporary capitalist societies, that is, a context formed by social hierarchies and relations of domination, a personal consciousness is intrinsically bound to be ideological, precisely

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[98] In was only eight years ago that Francis Fukuyama suggested that liberal democracy is the "end point of mankind's ideological evolution" and "the final form of human government", that the conditions of social hierarchy and competition that have developed in the Western world are precisely those conditions which would enable individuals to realise their natural desire for recognition and eminence, and fulfil their potential. Hence History, in Fukuyama's view, "understood as a single, coherent, evolutionary process" finds its future potential in the actuality of the present (1992: xi-xii).

[99] This assertion may not, after all, be as superfluous and repetitive as it initially appears to be, especially when it is thought of in the context of a social world that has hardly established these basic preconditions of life for all human beings, despite its unquestionable material capacity to do so.

[100] The concept of 'Critique of Ideology' derives from the philosophical problematic of the Frankfurt School and its attempt to justify a 'Critical Theory' that can elucidate the ideological 'misrecognition' of reality, while

because it is bound to its social position within a framework of class-antagonism and conflicting interests. To claim, on the other hand, that knowledge is *always* manifested as an ideological imposition, that it comes to be seen as knowledge at the very moment it articulates oppression, the moment it asserts itself as desire for domination and power, is to be deluded by hyperbole: to endorse an understanding of Western thought as alarmingly coherent and one-dimensional, a conception of modernity as an incessant pursuit of egotistic, self-centred interests, which has left no space intact by a commercialised logic of power and profit-making, no sphere in which human beings and human history could be conceived of as being otherwise.

That this was far from being the case becomes evident not only in the development of modern conceptions of knowledge and translatability, as we examined in the previous chapter, but also in the translated texts which constitute my case study. For what these texts indicate, as will be argued in the next pages, is the dual and inherently ambiguous position of the knowing subject in modern bourgeois societies. A position marked, at one and the same time, by limits and potentials, blindness and lucidity, social truths and ideological misrecognition.

Most importantly though, what these translation discourses bring to light is that translations do not only constitute abstract conceptions of knowledge, subjectivity and literary or cultural propriety. Instead they emerge as enunciations of historical subjectivities and the social structures within which these subjectivities are produced. That is to say, translations come into being as signifying practices, which are not only conceivable within the context of organised, structured social units, but also articulate social structures, they "present", as Althusser has argued, in their very form, the organisation of the societies which brought them into being (Althusser and Balibar 1968[1];1970: 189), and therefore the identities and positions of subjects and groups within these societies. From this point of view, translations and translation norms are not only seen as the products of social relations, but also as an expression of their social and historical context, and thus an index which can render this context visible for the present reader.

This is not to say that translations follow or faithfully mirror the social world of which they are part. Despite the methodological convenience of a model which would assume the structural homology between society and cultural or textual representation,[101] and even despite

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emphasising simultaneously the paradoxes and aporias that are inherent in such an attempt. On the issue see Jay (1973[1]; 1996: 253-280) and Geuss (1981).

[101] An argument for the homology of social and cultural-translation structures has been developed by Jean-Marc Gouanvic in relation to the translation of American science-fiction in France during the 1950s. Gouanvic relates these translations to the rise of a technophile petite bourgeoisie in the target society, which is seen as parallel to the technophile American middle-class of the 1920s (1997). The notion of such a homology between literary and social structures was originally suggested by Lucien Goldmann's work *Towards a Sociology of the Novel* (1964).

its undeniable significance as a reminder of the unity of social and cultural life, such an assumption, as Jameson has argued, seems misguided. For any supposition of a static homology, isomorphism or structural parallelism between social organisation and literary, translation or cultural production seems to be underwritten by the tacit assumption of the mechanical determination of the latter by the former, and as such fails to recognise the relative autonomy of the cultural field, which does not only enable the development of its own rules and modes of reproduction, but also constitutes a novel historical act, which allows cultural forms to stand at a distance from the social world and give voice to various critiques of it (1981: 41-44).

In contrast to such an assumption, Jameson suggests a reading of cultural works as parts of a symbolic network of meanings and forms, which are not to be seen as the direct and predictable outcomes of a social structure, nor as disengaged from society either. Instead, cultural works, he maintains, are formed through a process of restructuring, refraction and transformation of the social reality within which writers and translators are positioned. This means that the text, be it translation or original literature, is not viewed as a copy or an allegory of society as a whole. It rather stands as an integral part of a social life and simultaneously as the space in which social agents make sense of, seek to defend, justify, manage, control, criticise or refute this life. From this perspective, cultural texts stand as much in a relation of accordance with as in a relation of tension and opposition to historical social formations which constitute their precondition (ibid. 32-49, 76-77, 81-82).

The main supposition in Jameson's suggestion is that while texts express and articulate historical social structures and relations, they never do so in a direct way. The key notion Jameson uses to clarify this point is that of the 'political unconscious'; a term whose full significance is not relevant to my work,[102] but whose underlying logic can provide an illuminating perspective for the reading of translations and translation norms as social phenomena. Although it is borrowed from psychoanalysis, the term 'political unconscious' is for Jameson not an individual, but a collective unconscious, in which those aspects of history and social reality that are not conceptualised by the various individual consciousness and remain unexpressed or concealed in ideological discourses are gathered as sediments. This unconscious 'knowledge', in Jameson's view, is reinserted in cultural products in the form of contradictions, aporias or antinomies, that is, as symptoms of repression, projection, compensation or displacement of the reality of society and history (ibid. 44). Behind the

[102] Jameson writes as a literary theorist. He therefore relates the notion of the 'political unconscious' to the narrative form. This idea is proposed, as he argues, in an attempt "to restructure the problematics of ideology, of

textual form, narrative structure or translation choices, it is suggested, one can then read – or, more accurately, interpret and reconstruct – a prior "subtext", which is not to be understood as denoting a thing-in-itself, an immediately visible, common-sense, external reality, which perseveres inertly into the written form. Rather, this reality becomes attainable only as a form of reconstruction, as a rewriting or transcoding of the given text, which shows the text itself to be a rewriting: an expression and transformation of the social real within which and because of which the text was brought into being, and which is also carried within the text, drawn into the textual form (ibid. 80-81).

Two closely interrelated aspects of the notion of the 'political unconscious' are particularly important for our discussion: the first is Jameson's emphasis on the role of the political unconscious in the constitution of the intrinsically dialogical nature of the cultural text (an idea that is, of course, attributed to Bakhtin's and Vološinov's work[103]), which is not, however, grasped as a mere pluralism of voices, but acquires, in his work, a social and political significance (ibid.: 84). The second is his employment of the notion of a collective unconscious as a means to read *through* the text a "subtext" of history, thus defining the historical 'Real', which stands as the cause of particular textual choices as an "absent cause"; a cause which is not reducible to texts, but is nevertheless imperceptible and inaccessible to us except in textual form: "our approach to it", as Jameson writes, "necessarily passes through its prior textualisation, its narrativisation in the political unconscious" (ibid.: 35) [104]

The first of these points has already emerged in our discussion of modern conceptions of translation and knowledge and will guide my subsequent analysis of translations, both as a structured, norm-governed system and as texts. As part of the polysystem of the target society in question, the subsystem of translations from the classics exhibits, as will be discussed in the next chapter, a structure and relation to its context which justifies all assumptions of early polysystem theory: translated literature is imported to fill in a perceived 'gap' in the target culture, it stands in a context of hierarchical and antagonistic relations within this culture, it is

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the unconscious and of desire, of representation, of history, and of cultural production, around the all-informing process of narrative" (1981: 13).

[103] Both Bakhtin and Vološinov view the text as intrinsically "heteroglossic" and "dialogical", an expression of the "social multiaccentuality" of language, in which one does not merely discern pure ideological and manipulative forces, but the co-existence of social voices, the inscription of social conflicts and antagonism, as well as the capacity of historical societies to propose alternatives to their historical reality (Bakhtin 1934-35[1]; 1981; Vološinov 1929[1]; 1986: 23)

[104] This position is based on Althusser's notion of *Darstellung*. This concept is employed by Althusser in order to designate a model of historical causality in which the 'structure', which acts as the 'cause' of articulation is immanently, totally present in its effects (in discourses, repertoires), it has no other existence but in its re-presentation, while being simultaneously irreducible to it. It is thus argued by Althusser that "the structure is immanent in its effects, a cause immanent in its effects in the Spinozist sense of the term, that the *whole existence of the structure consists of its effects*, in short that the structure, which is merely a specific combination of its peculiar elements, is nothing outside its effects" (Althusser and Balibar 1968[1]; 1970: 189).

defined by the prestige and status of the source literature and so on. Yet it further seems that this very structure and the norms which determine its formation are shaped and produced by the discourses of the target social community: both by conceptions of translation and the translated texts in question.

What the latter develop is then a dual position. On the one hand, they articulate and seek to sustain the necessity of social and cultural divisions, the presumably beneficial consequences – or at least inevitability – of antagonistic relations, and the need to constitute society and culture as an organic whole which enables its groups and cultural forms to compete with each other, but maintains and sustains its hierarchical structure. On the other hand, there emerges another aspect of these translations, which interrupts their certainty and comes to oppose the naturalness and validity of their claims. This second voice not only indicates a kind of awareness or, an 'unconscious knowledge' of the ideology inscribed in the apparent meaning of the texts; it further directs us, as readers, from this meaning to the historical conditions of antagonism and hierarchies that define modern bourgeois societies. It thus enables us to read the claims put forward by the translated texts as the expression and legitimation of a certain social structure and organisation; an attempt to displace and conceal social inequality and opposition that develop as an inherent feature of social relations in modern capitalism, by naturalising them; and simultaneously a means to criticise and question the legitimacy of their social context, rather than the outcomes of either a universal structure or of agreement. What these translations then indicate, by their very duality, is that the norms which determine the target polysystem in question are related to the actual social stratification, oppositions and antagonism of the target context, and thus cannot be seen as the products of consensus among all participants in social communication, but as the outcomes and the means of advancing an imaginary consensus, which attempts to retain unity in an historically split and divided society.

Yet the 'Real' to which these translations direct us – and this point brings us to the second aspect of the 'political unconscious' – does not seem to be reducible to a history of domination, oppression, exploitation, as if human nature and human societies were essentially bound to evoke ideals of autonomy and equality only as ideological constitutions. Instead, what is concomitantly made evident through the reading of these texts is a different subtext: along with justifications of inequality and social divisions emerges a quest for another form of collective life; a need for a society which is not formed by social divisions, but is based on and acts to sustain equality, human solidarity and autonomy, and forms its knowledge of right and wrong through a process of collective self-institution. If then the 'Real' of a society can be

conceived in psychoanalytic terms, as an experience which is impossible to assimilate and introduce into language (the symbolic order),[105] an experience which is impossible to say, but nevertheless "returns" in the form of self-interruption, contradictions and aporias,[106] then this Real, the limit modern consciousness runs against, is not only the truth of our societies' 'inhuman' nature, the reality of our "barbarism".[107] It is also the truth of a civilisation, which emerges through the lines of existing ones, but can only be realised in a social reality that is different to the present.

[105] As Sean Homer explains, the Lacanian concept of the 'Real' functions as the limit of the other two Lacanian orders, i.e., the 'Symbolic' and the 'Imaginary'. Real, in Lacan's terms, is what resists symbolisation absolutely. The Real for the trauma, for example, is what the subject *cannot* assimilate, while the Real of repression is that which it is impossible to say. In other words, the Real does not have a substance or meaning, and, in this sense, all of its characteristics are purely negative (1998: 51).

[106] The 'Real' appears in this form precisely because it does not 'mean', but only functions, as Žižek has pointed out. It is its ambiguous function, as that which supports and interrupts the symbolic order that makes its presence perceptible. The ambiguity of the Lacanian Real, Žižek suggests, lies in the fact that it "is not merely a nonsymbolized kernel that makes a sudden appearance in the symbolic order, in the form of traumatic 'returns' and 'answers'." The Real is, at the one and the same time, the non-symbolised kernel which becomes present in the form of errors and contradictions, and also that which is contained in the very symbolic form. The Real is then "*immediately rendered* by this form" (in Homer 1998: 51). For a further discussion of Jameson's use of Lacan see Jameson's article "Imaginary and Symbolic in Lacan" (1977[1]; 1988).

[107] This point refers to Walter Benjamin's dictum that "there is no document of civilisation which is not at one and the same time a document of barbarism" (1950[1]; 1992: 248).

CHAPTER 3

TRANSLATIONS OF THE CONCEPT OF 'DEMOCRACY' IN THE POLYSYSTEM OF NINETEENTH-CENTURY BRITAIN

One of the most significant images of Athenian democracy was included in Thucydides's *History*. When fifth-century Athens came to the end of the first year of the Peloponnesian war, Thucydides writes, Pericles, political and military leader of the city, delivered his famous "Funeral Speech", which presented a glorifying image of the Athenian polity. The speech began by defining the name and features of this polity:

> καὶ ὄνομα μὲν διὰ τὸ μὴ ἐς ὀλίγους ἀλλ' ἐς πλείονας οἰκεῖν δημοκρατία κέκληται (II. xxxvii).

"Our constitution is called a democracy because power is in the hands not of a minority but of the whole people", as Rex Warner wrote in his translation of the passage (1954[1]; 1972:145). Warner's translation stems from the assumption that democracy entails the bestowal of power on the people; the postulate that at the root of all conceptions of democracy, as Anthony Arblaster has argued, "lies the idea of popular power, or a situation in which power and perhaps authority too, rests with the people" (1987[1]; 1993: 8).

From such a perspective, a different translation of Thucydides' *History*, written by Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679) in 1629, appears to distort the real image of the Athenian polity:

> We have a form of government ... which, because in the ***administration*** it hath ***respect not to a few, but to the multitude***, is called a democracy (1629[1]; 1843 8 191, my italics)

The essence of democracy in this translation is found not in the power of the people, but in the fact that government has regard to the multitude[108] ("hath respect to"[109]), that is, it has consideration for the majority in the administration of social issues. In other words, people do not govern themselves, but their views and interests are taken into account by the government.

A translation mistake, one may argue, if one could afford to ignore its constant repetition until at least the end of the nineteenth century. Hobbes' work, which was reprinted three times from the seventeenth to the middle-eighteenth century (1634; 1676; 1723), was succeeded by William Smith's translation. Smith suggested the following rewriting of the passage:

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[108] On the negative connotations of the word 'multitude' see Williams's *Keywords* 1976[1]; 1988: 192-197.

[109] According to the OED the phrase "to have respect for" meant "to have regard for" or "reference to something" (Cf. OED s.v. 'respect'). I am grateful to Joanne Collie for drawing my attention to the meaning of the term.

> ... our form [of government] as committed not to the few, but to the whole body of the people is called a democracy (1753[1]; 1831: 1. 167).

The translation presents again a division between the government and the people, but expresses in clearer terms the commitment of democratic governors to the entire social body. What is more, Smith does not relate democracy to the multitude, as Hobbes' translation did, but to the society as a whole, that is, to the well-being and interests of both the social elite and the majority. This choice does not, however, entail a conception of democracy as based on a condition of social equality. As Smith writes, classical democracy was only the product of "a love of Liberty", which was "warm and active in every Athenian", but had nevertheless "*erroneously* been supposed to thrive and flourish best in a democratical government" (1753: a, my italics).

Such a denial of what many of us would tend to recognise as the core of Athenian democracy, namely the sovereignty and equality of the people, becomes more meaningful when related to conceptions of democracy before the twentieth century, when political consensus in Western thought was based, as C. B. Macpherson notes, on negative appraisals of democratic constitutions:

> Democracy *used to be a bad word*. Everybody who was anybody knew that *democracy, in its original sense of rule by the people or government in accordance with the will of the bulk of the people would be a bad thing – fatal to individual freedom and to all the graces of civilized living*. That was the position taken by pretty nearly all men of intelligence from the earliest historical times down a hundred years ago (1966: 1, my italics).

For the translators in question, democracy, defined as a form of government bestowing power and authority on the people, was not an institution which establishes political and social justice, but a menace to social order and coherence, threatening both prosperity and progress. Then, after the first decades of the nineteenth century and within a period of fifty years, democracy, as Macpherson points out, "became a good thing" (ibid.: 1) and translators of classical Greek texts became one of the predominant agents of this transformation in Britain.

1. The Emergence of a Problematic on Democracy

The tradition of negative appraisals of classical democracy was initially manifested in Thomas Elyot's description of the Athenian city as a "monster with many heads" lacking stability and social coherence (1531[1];1883: 1. 9-10), and found one of its most famous expressions in Hobbes' translation of Thucydides. Hobbes' introduction to this translation described the ancient historian as "most hostile to democracy", on the grounds that social order and consistency would be damaged by following the demagogically susceptible political judgement of the common people (1629[1]; 1843: 8. xvi-xvii). The same belief was inscribed in

Hobbes' translation of Thucydides' phrase "διὰ τὸ μὴ ἐς ὀλίγους ἀλλ' ἐς πλείονας οἰκεῖν", which establishes a distinction between the multitude and the government that is absent from the source text, thus defining democracy as that specific form of government which does not stem from the political power of the majority, but nevertheless takes 'the multitude' into account when considering political matters. This line of thought, which either implied an unequivocal conviction of democracy or the reduction of democratic institutions to a matter of administration that takes the majorities into account appears in both major translations of Thucydides from the seventeenth until the late eighteenth century, i.e. Hobbes' and Smith's.[110] It thus enables us to speak of a canonical pattern and a form of normatively determined behaviour.

The viewpoint expressed in these translations was further sustained by a wide number of other rewritings and representations of Greek political thought. Hence the choice to interpret classical writers in ways that negated democratic values was theoretically sustained by Edmund Burke (1729-1797), who referred to Aristotle in order to argue that "democracy has many striking points of resemblance with a tyranny" (1790[1]; 1910: 121). The same position underwrote the translations of the Scottish historian and classicist John Gillies. More specifically, Gillies' translation of Aristotle's *Politics* was introduced as an attack on government based on consent, while the "true sense" of Aristotle's work was limited to the justification of the natural right of monarchic leaders to govern. Aristotle's description of man as a "political animal" was thus explained in the introduction and comments to the translation as an indication of the "natural" disposition of men to form political societies based on the authoritative power of monarchy and the strict separation of the main body of citizens and their government (1797: 2.3-6). In the same spirit, Gillies' translations of Lysias and Isocrates claimed to present an illustration of the unhappiness generated by republican polity and the turbulent life in "democracies", which were "deprived at once of civil liberty and national independence" (1778: 1.lxii-lxiii).

In a similar spirit, Gillies' *History of Ancient Greece* intended "to explore the dangerous turbulence of Democracy", describe "the incurable evils inherent in every form of Republican polity", and evince "the inestimable benefits" of "hereditary Kings and the steady operations of well-regulated Monarchy" (1786[1]; 1792: 1.iii). Likewise, William Mitford's

[110] To my knowledge, no other book-length translation of Thucydides' *History* was published during this period. There is only one translation of selected passages of the source text, which refer to the plague (i.e. the illness) that affected Athens during the Peloponnesian war, written by Tho. Sprat [sic] and published in 1679. Before the publication of Hobbes' translation, only one translation of Thucydides' text was available, made by Thomas Nicholls (1550). This work, which used a French translation of Thucydides as a source text, was never printed

History of Greece (the first major work on the topic in English[111]) stressed the "uncertainty and turbulence of democratic rule", the inherent tendency of ancient democracies to encourage "ambitious individuals to make popular passion serve their private purposes" and the evident undermining of the Athenian democracy by the "want of one supreme authority" whenever the city encountered serious problems and difficulties (1778[1]; 1835: 1. 326, 2. 104-105).[112] While Mitford was willing to stress that the cultural development of fifth-century Athens had reached a "perfection that no country hath since surpassed" (ibid.: 2. 299), he considered classical civilisation as the result of a "peculiar felicity" that happened to bring at the time the most competent of men in the 'right' positions and was not connected to democratic politics. As he stated,

> It was the peculiar felicity of Athens in this period that, of the constellation of great men which arose there, each was singularly fitted for the situation in which the circumstances of the time required him to act (ibid. 2: 251-252).

What was perceived by the Athenians themselves and, as will be seen, by several liberal translators of the nineteenth century as the foundation of classical culture, namely the democratic institutions and polity, was described by Mitford as detrimental to the development of literature, arts and philosophy, on the grounds that democracy failed to promote excellence and social cohesion:

> That form of government compelled the men to associate all with all. The general assembly necessarily called all together; and the vote of the meanest citizen being there of equal value with that of the highest, the more numerous body of the poor was always formidable to the wealthy few (ibid.: 2. 301).[113]

Their internal diversity notwithstanding, translations and rewritings of classical democracy from the sixteenth until the late eighteenth century appear to have been defined by the denial of any value democracy may be considered to have and/or the tendency to dissociate classical culture from institutions establishing the liberty, equality and sovereignty of the Athenian citizens. Yet, while it is clear that none of these works bestowed a definitively positive value on the concept of democracy, the central issue regarding the period opened up by Hobbes' translation is that representations of classical Athens provided a space,

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again after that time. This information was found in Foster's bibliographical survey (1918: 117-118). I have not been able to view either of these translations.

[111] On this issue see Momigliano 1952: 12-14.

[112] The first volume of Mitford's *History* appeared in 1776, while the completed work (four volumes) was published in 1778. This was the most widely read book on the topic until the publication of George Grote's *History of Greece* in the middle of the nineteenth century.

[113] It is worth noting, at this point, Mitford's description of the position of women in Athens. The historian presents the exclusion of women from the public realm as their conscious effort to avoid democratic society: a society which presumably compels every man to associate with all others. As Mitford puts it, "the ladies, to avoid a society which their fathers and husbands could not avoid, lived with their female slaves" (ibid.: 2. 301).

within which democracy was spoken about, a field for discussion, which sought to illuminate the political features of the Athenian society through historical writings and reproduce the cultural and intellectual voices that grew out of democratic institutions through the translation of classical texts. No doubt, this discussion was initiated by emphasising the distance of modern societies from democratic ideas and politics. Still, after the sixteenth or seventeenth century, both translations and other forms of rewriting classical culture became engaged in an attempt at demarcating this distance as lucidly as possible; at pointing out one by one all of the features of the Athenian democracy; at giving reasons for the rejection or the reformulation of its values; and finally, at examining in all details the implications of democratic practices for modern social organisations. Such a proliferation of discourses, as Foucault has emphasised (1976[1]; 1990), cannot merely be examined as a negation of democratic principles; an attempt at oppressing the political power of the majority and suppressing its potential for political participation. For apart from asserting the dangers of democratic institutions, or more accurately, irrespective of the expression of negative or positive appraisals, these writings acted to introduce the notion of 'democracy' into the political thought of their time and determined (among other factors) its subsequent range of meanings and significance. In this sense, they constituted the conceptual frameworks within which democracy was revived at the time and accepted as a positive concept and a legitimate form of government during the next centuries.

The question then at stake, as Foucault's methodological position clarifies, is not merely to state whether these texts say yes or no to democracy, whether they assert or deny its importance, but to account for the fact that democracy is (for the first time after the ancient classical years) extensively spoken about, "to discover who does the speaking, the positions and viewpoints from which they speak, the institutions which prompt people to speak about it and which store and distribute the things that are said" (ibid.: 11). Most significantly, one is required to understand the words and concepts through which these discourses are constituted, illuminate their relations to their intellectual and cultural past and find, as Reinhard Koselleck holds, the language experiences that are stored in them (1998: 35). From such a perspective, one can then proceed to examine the position of these discourses in the broader conceptual frameworks of their time and seek to reconstruct, through their reading, the historical conditions that necessitated their constitution and were articulated in them.

In this sense, one can initially identify two interrelated notions evoked by these works: that of the individual, civil subject, and that of social hierarchies. Hobbes' translation, which was considered to have a deep and lasting influence on the development of the philosopher's

thought and language,[114] expressed a concept that was hardly an established part of his contemporary political discourses and was destined to become the central assumption of liberal democratic thought[115] in the next centuries: that of the 'subject', who is able to contemplate and discuss social matters, and has the right to be a 'citizen' of a state. This idea was most clearly conveyed by the translation of the debates that took place in the Athenian *Ecclēsia* (Assembly) and constitute a significant part of Thucydides' books. These debates portray a model for political organisation, based on reasoned discussion and deliberation among (male) citizens, who are given full freedom to speak and decide on issues of public concern, while being considered in this context as moral and political equals. The translation of these passages did not merely record the speeches and dialogues of the source text. It rather functioned metonymically, as an evocation of the broader social and political life of classical Athens.[116] In other words, Hobbes' translation did not merely transfer the source text as an historical document, but presented a model for political institution and social organisation.

In this capacity, this work became an integral part of a wider seventeenth-century problematic over the legitimacy of religious authorities, the status of monarchic power and the feudal system of property rights. Written only thirteen years before the outbreak of the English civil war in 1642, in a context which was marked by radical economic and social changes – the passage from feudalism to a capitalist mode of production, and the subsequent constitution of the bourgeois classes, represented in the House of Commons – this evocation of democratic polity set up the traits of a political model, which could fulfil the needs of the newly emergent bourgeoisie to contest previously established hierarchies and articulate a range of values and ideals that would legitimise its social position and power. The key concept in this process was that of the 'individual': the 'self-conscious' human being, who does not automatically subject himself [sic] to a social condition prescribed by God (and materialised by the representatives of God on earth, the monarch, the aristocracy and church-authorities), but can freely formulate his own political opinion and will. It was due to this radical idea of 'individuality', which was further elaborated in the *Leviathan* (1651[1];1968), that Hobbes can be described, in Foucault's terms, as a "founder of discursivity" (1969[1];

[114] On the issue see Rossini 1987:303.

[115] The meaning of 'liberal democracy' has not remained stable in different historical periods and political contexts. The concept will be employed in two interrelated ways in this work: a) descriptively, in the sense that it will be taken to signify the ways liberal discourses describe their "attempt to uphold the values of freedom of choice, reason and toleration in the face of tyranny, the absolutist system and religious intolerance" (Held 1996: 74. Cf. Dunn 1979: 28-54) and b) critically, in the sense that it will be taken to signify an ideological conception of liberty, reason and toleration, which acts to reinforce socioeconomic hierarchies and asymmetrical power relations.

[116] For a discussion of the metonymic function of translation see Tymoczko 1999: 41-61.

1998: 216-220), who set up, in conjunction with his main theoretical opponent, John Locke (1632-1704), the "rules of formation" of liberal democratic discourses.

Hobbes' individuals were essentially self-interested, uncultivated and unable to solve by themselves social conflicts and oppositions. Hence their freedom had to be surrendered to the power of a sovereign governor. Yet this move of subjection could only be legitimised once individuals *decided* to establish this power and *agreed* to obey it.[117] What is more, this form of sovereign government was no longer the expression of the will of God. It was described in the *Leviathan* as 'representative' of the will of the people. As Hobbes puts it,

> a Multitude of men are made *One* Person, when they are by one man, or one Person, Represented; so that it be done *with the consent of every one of that Multitude in particular* (1651[1];1968: 220, my italics)

This conception of representation, which bestowed a limited and controlled political freedom on the social body, but implied simultaneously the exclusion of the people from political constitution and government, dictated the transformation of one of the most renowned features of the Athenian democracy in Hobbes' translation: the direct participation of all citizens in the common affairs and political decisions of the city. The Athenian citizens, as Thucydides writes, were all equally responsible for the political government of the city:

> ἔνι τε τοῖς αὐτοῖς οἰκείων ἅμα καὶ πολιτικῶν ἐπιμέλεια καὶ ἑτέροις πρὸς ἔργα τετραμμένοις τὰ πολιτικὰ μὴ ἐνδεῶς γνῶναι· μόνοι γὰρ τόν τε μηδὲν τῶνδε μετέχοντα οὐκ ἀπράγμονα, ἀλλ' ἀχρεῖον νομίζομεν, καὶ αὐτοὶ ἤτοι κρίνομέν γε ἢ ἐνθυμούμεθα ὀρθῶς τὰ πράγματα (II. xl).

Hobbes translated the passage as follows:

> Moreover there is in the same men, a care both of their own and the public affairs, and a *sufficient knowledge* of state matters, *even in those that labour with their hands*. For we only think *one that is utterly ignorant therein*, to be a man, not that meddles with nothing, but is good for nothing. *We likewise weigh what we undertake, and apprehend it perfectly in our minds* (1629[1]; 1843:8, 194, my italics)

The most striking transformation of the source text is found in the rendering of the phrase "μόνοι γὰρ τόν τε μηδὲν τῶνδε μετέχοντα οὐκ ἀπράγμονα, ἀλλ' ἀχρεῖον νομίζομεν", which says that the Athenian people considered a man who did not participate in politics (τόν τε μηδὲν τῶνδε μετέχοντα) to be worthless and incompetent (ἀχρεῖον), into a much milder renunciation of apolitical men as "utterly ignorant" of public affairs and state matters. Hobbes' position was further sustained by the translation of the phrase "καὶ ἑτέροις πρὸς ἔργα τετραμμένοις τὰ πολιτικὰ μὴ ἐνδεῶς γνῶναι", which says that the people who are

[117] For a further discussion of this issue see Held 1996: 76-78.

chiefly involved in work (πρὸς ἔργα) have "no lack of insight into political matters",[118] by the statement that there is "sufficient knowledge of state matters, even in those that labour with their hands". The translated phrase not only diminishes the involvement of the Athenian people in politics, by suggesting that citizens have merely "sufficient knowledge" of political issues, but also introduces the idea that those "who labour with their hands" and are presumably the least likely to be involved in politics are in possession of this knowledge. Historically speaking, the closest equivalent of Hobbes' conception of manual labour in the Athenian context would probably be slaves, not workers, and this is the reason why the original talks about ἔργα, that is 'work' in general, rather than manual work.[119] A final change can be found in the translation of the last phrase of the passage, which says, according to Charles Foster Smith's translation, that "we Athenians decide public questions for ourselves" (1956: 329).[120] Hobbes' translation does not bestow a political connotation on this statement. It describes, instead, a process of intellectual evaluation and apprehension ("We likewise weigh what we undertake, and apprehend it perfectly in our minds"), which is not related to "public questions" and political decisions, as is the case in the source text.

If Hobbes was reluctant to recognise individual sovereignty, Locke, at the end of the seventeenth century, employed the concept of 'man', in order to celebrate the rationality of individuals as well as their natural property of "Lives, Liberties and Estates", and the obligation of political government to protect this property (1690[1]; 1988: 350). The work of both of these thinkers was appropriated by the founders of the American constitution and became the basis for the ambivalent disposition of American revolutionary thought towards the Athenian democracy. Despite some general appeals to classical antiquity, the founding of the United States of America manifested a self-distancing of republican thought from "purely" democratic affiliations, on the grounds that the exercise of political power by the commons would violate the principle of mixed government and endanger individual liberty and rights. "Pure democracies", as Madison wrote in the *Federalist* in 1788 (no. 10),

> have ever been spectacles of turbulence and contention, have ever been found incompatible with personal security or the rights of property, and have in general been as short in their lives as they have been violent in their deaths (Hamilton, Madison and Jay 1787-1788[1]; 1987: 126).

The reason for the presumed failure of democratic institutions was claimed to be the "naturally" self-interested character of the people, which stands at the root of an all-pervasive

[118] The translation used is Charles Forster Smith's (1956: 329).
[119] Cf. C. F. Smith's translation of the phrase as those "who give attention chiefly to business" (1956:329).
[120] Cf. Warner's translation "We Athenians, in our own persons, take our decisions on policy or submit them to proper discussions" (1954[1]; 1972: 174).

conflict and antagonism in every social community. Madison followed Hobbes in believing that the pursuit of pre-eminence, power and personal profit are the inescapable features of human nature, which "have divided mankind ... inflamed them [people] with mutual animosity, and rendered them much more disposed to vex and oppress each other than to co-operate for the common good". But the most durable source of antagonism, Madison states, has always been "the various and unequal distribution of property", since those who hold unequal proportions of property consistently form groups with "distinct interests in society" (ibid.: 124). The assumption that human societies are *naturally* based on socioeconomic inequality and conflicting interests (which is profoundly contradicted by Madison's assertion that social opposition has a social cause, namely the unequal distribution of property) necessitated, for Madison, the abandonment of democratic ideals and the adherence to a "republican" political organisation, which was sharply distinguished from the idea of direct bestowal of power on the people. In this context, as Russell Hanson explains, "a democracy represented rule *by* the 'commons' or *demos*", while "a republic was ruled *in* common *for* the commonweal" (1985:77; cf. Hanson 1989[1];1995).

The establishment of this semantic distinction was crucial for the subsequent transformation of 'democracy' into a positive term and the reappraisal of the Athenian polity. As Jennifer Roberts has argued, by coopting republican principles for liberal ends, Madison managed both to detach the democratic discourse from republicanism and to establish a redefinition of terms whereby an aristocratic theory of politics was couched in sufficiently democratic language, so that the founders would later be claimed as the originators of American democracy. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, Jefferson was able to assert that "we in America are self-consciously ... democrats". This new conception of 'democracy', as Roberts points out, had been made possible by the reiteration in the *Federalist* of the destructive or irrelevant nature of the Athenian political system. This semantic transformation would enable the far more enthusiastic picture of classical democracy that emerged in the nineteenth century in both Europe and the United States of America (1994:186).

Democracy began to be described in positive terms, once it ceased to evoke ideals of a fully realised equality and popular power, and was, instead, related to a liberal form of polity, the establishment of basic civil rights and parliamentary representation, which left secure the hierarchical social structures of modern bourgeois societies. In the course of the nineteenth century democracy was equated with a political system based on extended and later universal adult suffrage, together with the protection of civil rights – freedom of speech and political association, and security of life and property – as well as the equality of citizens before the

law. These traits, which were forcefully asserted by the *French Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen* in 1789, and were gradually accepted as legitimate throughout Western Europe, transformed democracy into a matter of legal and political administration, which was strictly dissociated from the unequal positions from which social agents were able to participate in social institutions and politics. This move, as Raymond Williams points out, involved a substantial de-radicalisation of democratic thought. For it implied the dissociation of democracy from connotations of popular power and thus its distancing from a political system in which the interests of the majority are both exercised and controlled by the majority itself (1976[1]; 1988: 96). In many ways Hobbes' and Smith's translations provide us with the key concepts employed in this redefinition of democratic polity: a) the concept of the relatively autonomous 'individual', defined as an abstract, universal figure, who stands against the political government of society and is accountable to the rule of laws, irrespective of his or her social position and power to affect this government and the laws that sustain it; b) the concept of social hierarchies – implied in Hobbes' use of the term 'multitude'; c) the idea that these distinctions entail conflicting aims and interests, which must be taken into account and reconciled by a democratic government; and d) the division between the 'people' of a community – what would be subsequently named by translators as 'civil society' – and a system of political institutions and government.

The development of these ideas was interwoven with the establishment of industrial capitalist societies and the values employed in order to conceptualise and sustain them. Liberal democracy and capitalism, as Macpherson points out, go together:

> Liberal democracy is found only in countries whose economic system is wholly or predominantly that of capitalist enterprise. And, with few and mostly temporary exceptions, every capitalist country has a liberal democratic political system (1966: 4).

This coexistence is not coincidental. The key features of liberal democracy, which establish the essential contestability of fixed social hierarchies and the idealisation of competition, but nevertheless posit social inequality as the basis of political freedom and civil rights stand in total accordance, as Marx argued, with the logic of commodity production and the rules of the capitalist market. The capitalist mode of production, as Marx's work has shown, is based on and acts to construct a condition of socioeconomic inequality, which is neither the obvious outcome of all forms of political economy nor the natural feature of all historical or conceivable societies. Inequality has rather developed as the feature of a specific mode of economic and social organisation, in the context of which different classes acquire distinct and hierarchically stratified economic and social positions – defined by Marx in relation to the possession of productive resources – from which they participate in exchange relations

that perpetuate and strengthen these inequalities.[121] Likewise, the idea of 'competition', as Marx explains in the *Grundrisse*, has historically developed to mean the abolition of a certain range of obstacles and limits peculiar to the levels of production that obtained before the development of capital (a condition described by the physiocrats as *laissez faire, laissez passer*) and came to represent the clash between individuals released from social and political bonds and acting only in their own interests. In this sense, the very prerequisite of this form of free competition has been the domination of capitalist production. "Free competition", Marx writes, is "the relation of capital to itself as another capital, i.e. it is the real behaviour of capital as such", which becomes conceived of as the freedom of individuals. In other words, free competition is a condition that stems from the nature of capitalist economy and is thereby expressed conceptually as an external necessity. It becomes (rather than *is*) the natural condition of social development, at the cost of effacing its engendering in a certain kind of economic, political and social organisation (1953[1]; 1977: 371-373).

Let us further elaborate this point. The concepts and rules that arise in the context of the capitalist market, as Marx has maintained, play a fundamental role in the conception of other aspects of social life and set up the conditions for the construction of a political framework, by which social and economic relations are canonised and directed. Hence, the individual freedom to participate in commodity exchange and pursue profit, without being bound by restrictions imposed by the feudal system of stratification and property rights, but also the freedom of the working classes to sell their labour and thus subject themselves to capital as well as the formal equality of opportunity, which not only conceals the unequal social positions from which people pursue their goals, but is also bound to result in antagonistic relations and socioeconomic inequality, are notions that emerged in the functioning of the market and were redefined in relation to the organisation of the social and cultural life of modern bourgeois societies.[122] Still the most significant notion that developed in this context and was evidenced in the translations in question was the opposition between 'civil society' and 'political society', i.e. the presumably representative institutions of the democratic state. Civil society, according to Marx and Engels, emerged in the eighteenth century as that aspect of social organisation which embraced the whole range of commercial intercourse, industrial development and cultural life and was presumed to be opposed to or at least dissociated from the political realm. In the context of civil society human beings were understood as individuals, rather than citizens, and thereby the civil context was

[121] For a further analysis of this issue see the first volume of *Capital* (1883[1], 1970).
[122] See Marx and Engels' *The German Ideology*, especially parts 1-3 (1965[1]; 1974: 39-81).

conceptualised as antithetical to political society and to a conception of man as a political subject.[123] This antithesis became the foundation of representative democratic institutions and politics. Democracy was defined as that form of political government which is separated from the social body in order to protect and secure the 'civil rights' of individuals, irrespective of the latter's position within social and cultural hierarchies. Hence the democratic state, as Marx maintains, abolishes the distinctions established by birth, social rank, education, occupation, "when it decrees that birth, social rank, education, occupation are *non-political* distinctions; when it proclaims, without regard to these distinctions, that every member of society is an *equal* partner in popular sovereignty". It is only on this condition that this state can assert to represent and pursue the *common* interests of the society as a whole (1843[1]; 1975: 219). Yet social hierarchies are not effaced, because they are claimed to be non-relevant to political organisation and institutions. Neither do they leave this organisation and institutions unaffected. How can wealth or social rank be non-political, as C. J. Arthur remarks, when they provide access to the means of political persuasion and influence? And how can the uneducated man be in the same position as the educated one with respect to formulating meaningful politics? Or how can the political opportunities of a man of leisure be the same as those of less privileged members of a community? (1974: 10-11) In other words, how can these divisions be considered as politically insignificant simply because they are claimed to be so?

As the following reading of translations will seek to argue, the ideals of civil rights to freedom, security and property that formed the basis of liberal democracy not only developed as the outcome of the specific institutions and organisation of bourgeois societies; they further acted to silence the historical and political foundations of these societies, thus presenting the social structures and politics of their historical context as given and natural. But more than this, the democratic ideals of freedom and equality, which were presumably policed by the government were, in this social context, essentially unrealisable. The conditions that guaranteed for each individual the conservation of his person, rights and property, as Marx has suggested, could not have enabled the actual establishment of freedom and equality, since they prevented civil society from rising above the self-interested and egotistic behaviour that define the capitalist market. On the contrary, the security provided by the values, norms and political laws of the democratic state became the guarantee of the society's divisions, suppression of freedom and egoism (1843[1]; 1975: 230).

[123] See Marx and Engels 1965[1]; 1974: 57-60, Marx 1843[1]; 1975.

In this framework, the nineteenth-century turn to classical Athens, which was not only a British, but a wider cultural phenomenon in Western Europe,[124] and the rewriting of the concept of 'democracy' specifically, developed as a discursive field which articulated and legitimised these ambiguous ideals by projecting them onto the political institutions of classical Athens. In this sense, translations of the ancient Greek concept of 'democracy', as will be examined, became integrated into the political thought of the period and acted to nourish and sustain the social conditions within which they emerged. These very conditions, however, did not only entail the establishment of social inequality, opposition and relations of domination and exploitation. Their attainment was rooted in a logic that was inherently capable of transforming and transcending itself; a thought-mode that stemmed, according to Marx, from the constant need to revolutionise the socioeconomic conditions on which it was based, and thus provided the foundations for the questioning of *all* conceptions of the social world, including those which fostered its maintenance. Capitalist societies, Marx suggested, and the predominant agent of their development, the bourgeoisie, "cannot exist without constantly revolutionising the instruments of production, and thereby the relations of production and with them the whole relations of society" (1848[1]; 1978: 476). This necessity stands then as the precondition and the instigator of a perpetual self-transformation and problematisation of social, cultural and political givens:

> Constant revolutionising of production, uninterrupted disturbance of all social conditions, everlasting uncertainty and agitation, distinguish the bourgeois epoch from all earlier ones. All fixed, fast frozen relations, with their train of ancient and venerable prejudices and opinions, are swept away, all new formed ones become antiquated before they can ossify. All that is solid melts into air, all that is holy is profaned (ibid.: 476)

This image depicts a context of instability, which provides the conditions for self-critique and does not allow for the acceptance of a social, moral or cultural order as transcendent. In the framework of bourgeois societies, it is argued, values, ideals and beliefs are objects for questioning and consideration propelled by the absence of all immanent standards that may uphold them. No aspect of social life remains untouchable by the dynamics of this critique. However firmly positions, politics and ideals may be put in the place of traditional authorities, their triumph can neither be secured nor stabilised. Its power can only be short-lived, precarious and ultimately self-subversive.

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[124] For a further discussion of this issue see Sandys' history of classical scholarship (1903-1908[1]; 1964), Lloyd's discussion of classical influences in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (1982), Pfeiffer's study of the history of classical scholarship in Italy, France and Germany (1976), and Turner's discussion of the role of classical thought in nineteenth-century Europe 1981: 1-3.

This questioning of principles by which social and political life is understood, which was described by Marshall Berman as the most prominent feature of the experience of modernity (1982), stood as the foundation of democratic thought and defined the ambivalent standpoint of modern interpretations and translations of classical democracy. In all of these works we will find that any attempt to justify and present as immanent an historical social structure generates a possibility for its own self-critique; it is compelled to doubt itself; to acknowledge that social and cultural life can always develop to be otherwise.

2. The Position of Translations in the Historical Context of Nineteenth-Century Britain

After the beginning of the nineteenth century, the British interest in classical culture and politics was remarkably intensified. Hobbes' translation was reprinted five times (1812; 1822; 1824; 1841; 1843),[125] and Smith's translation six times throughout the century (1805, 1812, 1815, 1831, 1892; 1898). A significant proportion of these publications were initiated and/or endorsed by utilitarian thinkers, while a number of Hobbes' translations was edited under the auspices of Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832). Bentham was the political philosopher who formulated, together with James Mill (1773-1836), the basic principles of nineteenth-century English liberalism (Held 1996: 95) and, in Macpherson's terms, the "founding model for democracy for a modern industrial society" (1977: 43). Bentham, James Mill and the Utilitarians in general, as Held suggests, developed at the time one of the clearest justifications for the liberal democratic state, which creates the conditions necessary for individuals "to pursue their private interests without the risk of arbitrary political interference, to participate 'freely' in economic transactions, to exchange labour and goods on the market and to appropriate resources privately" (1996: 95). The extended appeal of Hobbes' translation during the first decades of the nineteenth century was part of this significant turn in the British philosophical and political thought, which entailed the appropriation of classical 'democracy' by utilitarian and liberal discourses.

In the context of this turn, the meaning of democracy no longer evoked an idea of social equality and actual political sovereignty. Bentham's and Mill's focus on the individual as the most important entity in politics[126] was not a recognition of a fully materialised subjective freedom and autonomy. Liberal democracy, as Macpherson explains, is a system "by which people can be *governed*", that is, made to do things they may not otherwise do and

[125] During the same period (1839-45) Hobbes' entire corpus was collected and edited by Sir W Molesworth. This information was found in *The Westminster Review* (1867a: 344).
[126] For a further discussion of this issue see Francis and Morrow 1994: 58-59.

refrain from things they otherwise may have done. So long that this government is not controlled by the people themselves, "democracy ... is then a system by which power is exerted by the state over individuals and groups". Most significantly though, a democratic government exists to uphold and enforce a certain kind of society, and therefore a certain range of relations among individuals, a certain set of rights and claims that people have on each other, both directly and indirectly through their rights to property. These relations, as Macpherson argues, are relations of power: they stem from the conditions of social, economic and cultural inequality that are established in capitalist societies, while acting, in turn, to nourish and strengthen these conditions (1966: 4. Cf. 35-45).[127]

In such a framework, the reading of Hobbes' and Smith's work, and the translations which followed them, no longer evoked a revolutionary conception of the Athenian democracy, against which modern societies had to guard themselves. Far from asserting a radical challenge to the utilitarian and liberal ideals of the time, this representation of the Athenian polity was able to support their values, articulate their opposition to monarchic regimes, sustain their commitment to an individualistic politics, and legitimise their intrinsically ambivalent and self-contradictory ideals of 'liberty' and 'equality'.

2.1 The Target Polysystem as a Political Construct

Parallel and interrelated to the change in political theorising was the development of a wider European interest in classical Greece. As Turner points out, this was manifested in an unprecedented enthusiasm for Greek cultural production, evidenced in literature, arts, scholarly discourses and – I would add – translation. The turn towards ancient Greece was a novel phenomenon in European intellectual life. Until the late eighteenth century, according to Turner, most European thinkers conceived of their culture as Roman and Christian in origin, having only an indirect relation to classical Greece.[128] The search for new cultural roots in Greek antiquity, which was initiated by German Hellenists such as Winckelmann, Lessing, Goethe, Schiller and Hölderlin,[129] assumed major intellectual significance in both

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[127] In the context of liberal-democratic societies power relations should not be considered as confined to the constitution of a legal framework by which social rights and duties were determined. As Foucault has argued in *Discipline and Punish*, the development of liberal-utilitarian thought during this period presents an exemplary case of a highly effective disciplinary mechanism that extends beyond the legal force of the state. This mechanism, which was codified, according to Foucault, in Bentham's idea for the 'Panopticon', defined "power relations in terms of the everyday life of men", in the determination of appropriate, permissible and inappropriate modes of behaviour that defined personal and social life and relations (1975[1]; 1977 : 205, Cf. Foucault 1977[1]; 1980).

[128] The issue is further discussed by Turner in his article "Why the Greeks and not the Romans in Victorian Britain" (1989). For a meticulously documented presentation and analysis of the nineteenth-century British interest in classical Greek antiquity see Turner 1981 and Jenkyns 1980.

[129] A significant study on German Hellenism is Eliza Marian Butler's *The Tyranny of Greece over Germany* (1935).

Europe and the United States of America, when ideas, beliefs and institutions inherited from the Roman and Christian past became problematical and Western intellectuals felt the need "to understand and articulate the disruptive political, social, and intellectual experience that Europeans confronted in the wake of the Enlightenment and of revolution" (1981: 1-3).

In the British context this newly acquired authority of Greek antiquity was sustained by an increasingly dominant position of Greek studies in the educational institutions of the period.[130] Since the medieval times and until the early eighteenth century the education in the British public schools, Oxford and Cambridge focused on the Latin tradition. Throughout the eighteenth century Oxford's programmes were dedicated to Latin and to a much lesser extent to Greek, while at Cambridge equal attention was paid to both literatures, but the university's work was predominantly directed toward the study of mathematics. A stronger interest in Greek antiquity was expressed after the middle eighteenth century and was evidenced in the reception of the work of two travel writers, James Stuart and Nicholas Revett, *The Antiquities of Athens* (1761), which became one of the most popular books among the literary and scholarly circles of the time (Jenkyns 1980: 3-4). After the first years of the nineteenth century, the study of the Greek classics was substantially strengthened at the public schools and became the predominant focus of the new programme of *Literae Humaniores* at Oxford (1807) and, after 1824, of the study programmes at Cambridge.[131]

This institutional shift was sustained by a discourse which claimed the contemporary relevance and value of classical education, whose purpose was conceived to be the cultivation of "manliness, patriotism and a love of liberty", the teaching of "the love of Goodness", the "devotion to the welfare of one's country" and the constitution of "valuable moral lessons" (Clarke 1945:12-13). Greek thought, as D. H. Urquhart' s *Commentaries on Classical Learning* indicate, was presented as valuable to men of all professions and ranks: "the lawyer", "the physician", the "naval and military officer", "the statesman", "the artist" and "the merchant" (1803: 6-66). A similar viewpoint was expressed by schoolmasters in the public schools, including Samuel Butler, B. A. Kennedy, and Thomas Arnold, whose work stressed the need to relate classical learning to contemporary interests and understand the implications of Greek thought for the students' own life and experience, instead of pursuing a

[130] For a further discussion of this issue see Clarke 1959: 74-127. The following information on the classical education in Britain is largely based on Clarke's work, unless it is noted otherwise

[131] As Clarke points out, by the 1840s three separate Honours programmes had been established at Oxford a) a science programme consisting of Aristotle's *Ethics, Politics, Rhetoric,* and *Poetics* b) a history programme, consisting of Herodotus, Thucydides, Xenophon, Livy and Tacitus and c) a poetry programme, consisting of Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, Aristophanes, Pindar, Homer and Hesiod It is during this period that Oxford and Cambridge established the knowledge of Greek literature as an educational requirement for admission for

traditional study of texts only as models of style.[132] As Thomas Arnold wrote in the introduction to his edition of Thucydides:

> The history of Greece ... is not an idle inquiry about remote ages and forgotten institutions, but a living picture of things present, fitted not so much for the curiosity of the scholar, as for the instruction of the statesman and the citizen (1835:3.xviii, xxii)

Likewise a student of Samuel Butler praised his teacher for succeeding in making him believe that the study of the classics is "one thing worth living for" (Clarke 1959: 78).[133]

The educational programmes in the public and grammar schools were in fact far from materialising such goals, not least because they were predominantly based on pedantic translation exercises, which could not have significantly contributed to the learning of, let alone interest of the students in classical literature.[134] It is hardly surprising that in 1835 an anonymous writer in *The Monthly Magazine* considered that not more than one in fifty students remembered anything of their classical education, since the dullness of their school experience ruined any beauty ancient literature may have had for them (Romberg 1981: 31). A similar point is made by Bulwer Lytton in 1883, who wrote that the main clients in the public schools, that is, the upwardly mobile middle classes (which he named 'minor aristocracy') and the boys from traditional aristocracy, are wasting their money when they pay "for the Greek which [their sons] will never know" and affirmed that boys leave the public schools in general "with little Latin and no Greek" (Bowen 1989: 179). While there were certainly attempts at improving these educational standards, among which Arnold's, Butler's and Dr. Keate's work[135] were the most notable examples, it seems that an adequate learning of Greek could be achieved only in some of the public schools or alternatively through private

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every degree (1959: 98-127). Knowledge of Greek continued to be a requirement for admission to Oxford and Cambridge until after the First World War (Turner 1981: 5).

[132] On the issue see Clarke 1959: 74-97.

[133] This idea remains strong in the British context for the entire nineteenth century. In the middle of the century John Stuart Blackie's inaugural lecture at the University of Edinburgh was devoted to the justification of the usefulness of ancient Greek to every educational programme, from the study of law and theology to the study of medicine (1852: 10-24).

[134] Clarke points out that the use of translation in the teaching of ancient Greek was based on an insistence on accuracy, which entailed that the students had to translate each word of the original separately, in order to proceed to a translation into continuous English. Such translation exercises constituted an integral part of classical learning from the eighteenth to the nineteenth century (1959: 53-54, 77, 89). Margaret Kerr von Romberg mentions a number of writers, among whom Lord Byron, Bryan Waller Procter (Barry Cornwall), Coleridge, Charles Lamb, who were particularly critical of their classical education and asserted in later years that they had hardly learned any Greek from it or developed a genuine interest in the classics (1981: 25-37). Nicholas G. Round also describes the detrimental role of 'literal' translations and translation exercises, which remained part of the domain of traditional Greek and Latin teaching in Britain for a great part of the twentieth century (1998). C. O. Brink confirms that classical education in Britain was predominantly based on exercises in translation, unseen translation, as well as composition in Greek, but nevertheless describes them in rather positive terms, as a source of creativity and learning (1985: 126-129).

[135] Dr. Keate was headmaster at Eton from 1809 to 1834 and his lectures were described as being of exceptionally high quality and value (Lyte 1875: 339-367).

tuition[136] and for the students who went on to higher education, at Oxford and Cambridge. In the programmes of these universities translation was employed as a teaching method only during the first part of the students' education, while at more advanced stages there was a "tendency to study the classics not in and for themselves, but in relation to modern thought and life", as R. W. Livingstone wrote in 1932 (Turner 1981: 6).

The increase of translations from ancient Greek into English after the late eighteenth century, which was substantially prompted by the actual use and writing of translations in educational institutions, is striking. As the bibliographical survey of Finley M. K. Foster (1918) indicates, the majority of the translations printed from 1484 to 1916 were published during these years. More specifically, Foster's research shows that the total number of translations up to 1780 was 312, while book-length translations published from 1780 to 1900 reached 1259.[137] The growing interest in translations of the classics produced at the time a new form of publication, namely the classical library. The first of these libraries, as Foster points out, was *The Works of the Greek and Roman Poets, Translated into English Verse* in eighteen volumes (1809-1812), followed by *Valpy's Family Classical Library* (1830-1834) and then *Bohn's Classical Library* (1848-1863), which became the definitive edition for the nineteenth century and was only surpassed in popularity by the *Loeb Classical Library*, which began in 1912 (Foster 1918: xx).[138] Given the condition of classical studies in British educational institutions, which seems to validate Richard Jenkyns' argument that only a tiny minority of the British population could actually read Greek in the original (1980: 64),[139] it is legitimate to assume that a great proportion of the knowledge of classical Greece at the time was acquired through translations. Hence when R. Ogilvie speaks of the nineteenth century as a time when "in every walk of life we find men reading and re-reading the ... great classics" (1964: 103), we can justifiably take this statement to assert not the importance of Greek literature *per se*, but the influence that translations of Greek literature exercised at the time.

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[136] John Stuart Mill is a notable example of a privately educated scholar, who began learning Greek under the supervision of his father at the rather unusual age of three (Mill 1873[1]; 1969: 5).

[137] As Foster explains in the preface to his book, these figures do not include "solitary translations of excerpts from Greek literature" or "adaptations, paraphrases and the like" (1918:xi). Despite this assertion Foster's survey is, to my knowledge, the most extensive and well-documented work on the topic, and fortunately the writer does not adopt a very 'strict' definition of translation, despite his assertions. Still, the criteria he puts for the selection of translated texts should prevent us from overstating the results of statistical estimations based on the numbers presented in his work.

[138] In addition to the translations published in purely Greek Collections, many translations were included in general collections of books such as *Morley's Universal Library* (1884) *Cassell's National Library* (1887) *Lubbock's Hundred Best Books* (1891) *Temple Classics* (1897) among others (Cf. Foster 1918: xx-xxi).

[139] The same point is argued by K.J. Dover in the introduction to his work *Perception of the Ancient Greeks*, in which the author maintains that the perception of ancient Greece by the British people "was no perception at all, for the Greeks did not enter their consciousness" (1992: xi).

This change of preliminary norms that determined the translation from classical Greek[140] seems to confirm Even-Zohar's supposition of a 'crisis' as a significant cause of the expansion of translation activity and the structural transformation of a polysystem. The turn towards Greece can be understood as the outcome of a crisis that emerged at multiple levels of the target context: cultural, economic, social and political. Since already the previous centuries Europe had witnessed the breakdown of rural societies, the growth of commerce and industry, together with the expansion of the cities and the constitution of the middle classes, which challenged the ruling power of traditional aristocracy and the church, and became the agents of a radical transformation of the sciences, intellectual life, social structures and relations, and political institutions. The industrial revolution brought about in nineteenth-century Britain more than anywhere else the collapse of agrarian social organisation and the subsequent opposition to the aristocratic elite, which developed, on the one hand by the new classes of manufacturers, merchants and traders and, on the other hand, by the working classes.

British intellectual and cultural life was profoundly shaped by the attempt of the middle classes to challenge a system of values that had been established by feudal societies and construct a discourse that would uphold and legitimise modern capitalist order and their hegemonic position within it. A previously established system of convictions and values, which presented the feudal world as immanently given and unquestionable, was no longer considered as relevant to the needs and concerns of the time. Instead, the spirit which shaped the knowledge of this period developed to be strongly individualistic: man, as an individual and presumably sovereign being, became the measure of all truths and values, while competition set up the standards by which knowledge and ethical claims could be appraised and justified. Conceptions of the world as existing in a static and stable order, prescribed to men by God, had already began to fade since the end of the previous century.[141] Their authority was in crisis. Yet this crisis was historical, rather than formal in nature. Its foundations were laid by the establishment of a new form of social organisation, whose functioning and modes of development made traditional dominant models obsolete and necessitated the production of new ones. In other words, the crisis of the British polysystem was instigated by the social and historical conditions within which this polysystem was constituted and was not the outcome of a universalisable law, tendency or structure.

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[140] Preliminary norms, according to Toury, "have to do with two main sets of considerations which are often interconnected: those regarding the existence and actual nature of a definite translation policy, and those related to the directness of translation" (1995: 58).

[141] For a further discussion of this issue see chapter I.

In this context, the turn towards classical Greece and the extended engagement with the translation of classical literature presented a twofold resolution to this crisis. On the one hand, translations of Greek texts provided a widely legitimised past, which was historically dissociated from religious dogmatism and authority, but could nevertheless provide some stable grounds, by which a changing social world could be conceptualised, understood and controlled. This move could not, however, be materialised without the radical transformation of previous translations of the classics and a concomitant change of the source texts themselves. Hence, norms for the translation of democracy underwent a substantial change during this period. Translators moved from the assertion of a negative appraisal of democratic polity and the rewriting of Greek works as endorsements of an immanent system of truth and justice to an interpretation that sought to question and negate these ideas. As the century progressed, translations tended to idealise a model of intellectual plurality and relativism that became a key feature of liberal democracy. They suggested that all forms of enquiry and understanding, and all constitutions of laws derive from human thought and action. This condition made laws fragile and contingent, it prevented their authoritative imposition and necessitated their subjection to criticism, self-reflection and change. On the other hand, ancient Greek works were employed as a model for the establishment of new standards of authority, which expressed the positivistic, utilitarian and liberal convictions of their writers and affirmed the necessity of social inequality, the privileged position of 'meritorious' individuals in the constitution of politics and the desirability of antagonistic social relations. These two lines of interpretation articulated, in their interconnection, a new ideal of sociocultural order, that became interwoven with the political discourses of the period and developed to accord with the historical conditions of its production.

This new conception of society and politics was initially articulated by the very positioning of translations from the Greek within the polysystem of nineteenth-century Britain. The introduction of these works into the target polysystem entailed their location in a dominant position, which was sharply distinguished from the status of other cultural forms, and bestowed on these translations a value and authority, which other intellectual and cultural products were presumed to lack. By the same token, the reading, writing and rewriting of Greek constituted a form of cultural capital,[142] which was available only to certain social

[142] 'Cultural capital' is a term suggested by Pierre Bourdieu and has been defined as the competence in cultural codes, which is unequally possessed by the different classes of a society. In "The Forms of Capital" (1986) Bourdieu distinguishes three forms of capital, the 'economic', 'cultural' and 'social' and the same terms are employed in *Distinction* (1979[1], 1984). In his essay "What Makes a Social Class" he distinguishes "firstly, economic capital, in its various kinds, secondly, cultural capital or better informational capital, again in its different kinds, and thirdly two forms of capital that are very strongly correlated, *social* capital, which consists of

groups, and whose possession entailed the valorisation of these groups' social status and authority.[143]

It seems that despite all assertions regarding the importance of Greek literature, which came predominantly from the scholars who initiated the massive translation enterprise of this period, the idea that every woman and man of nineteenth-century Britain was reading the classics, as Ogilvie wrote (above), is historically inaccurate. In fact, only few British people had the luxury, time or education to read Greek literature, even in translation. The first group that should be excluded from this category is the working class. As Richard Altick's study *The English Common Reader* points out, working class women and men did not always have the capacity to read in their adulthood, due to lack of proper education, and even those who did were unlikely to think that Greek literature was of any relevance to their lives and interests (1957: 141-172). Moreover, books that could have been bought by them, as Romberg suggests, were circumscribed by their poverty, and even when the cheap popular libraries appeared at the price of five shillings per volume and contributed to the transformation of the book trade,[144] most working class people could not spend a week's wages on buying a translation of Plato or Thucydides (1981: 60; Cf. Altick 1957: 252-254). It goes without saying that no working class women or men produced any translations of ancient Greek at the time, and no obvious aspect of working class culture was in any way associated with nineteenth-century rewritings of classical thought.

The situation was different with the sons of middle-class families, whose education in Greek was in general considered useless for their future careers in trade and business, but many of whom developed a notable interest in classical literature, that was predominantly directed towards the reading and publication of translations. Romberg informs us of an interesting case of the successful publisher John Murray II, whose father explicitly requested the exclusion of Greek from his education, but whose personal interest in classical literature entailed his engagement with the publication of some of the most important translations and editions of Greek classics during the first half of the century (1981: 65-66).[145] The publication of numerous partial translations of and articles on Greek literature in periodicals that were addressed to a broad audience, including *The Edinburgh Review*, *The Quarterly Review*, *The Westminster Review* and *The New Monthly Magazine*, as well as the appearance of the series

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resources based on connections and group membership, and *symbolic capital*, which is the form the different types of capital take once they are perceived and recognised as legitimate (1987: 4).

[143] The notion of cultural capital has been related to translation by Lefevere (1998).

[144] On this issue see Altick 1957: 240-317.

of classical libraries, indicate that, despite their lack of knowledge of Greek, a significant number of middle class men read translations and followed an ongoing discussion on the classics. The reviewer of Valpy's *Family Classical Library* in the *New Monthly Magazine* confirms this point by emphasising that the value of the Library, which was neither "too bulky" nor "too expensive", lay precisely in its capacity to attract readers from "the multitudes who have been called in early youth to mercantile or agricultural pursuits, or to the bewitching dissipations and all-engrossing duties of the army and the navy" (1830: 142).[146] Improvements in popular education after the 1840s and especially after the 1870s (when the parliament passed England's Elementary Education Bill and proceeded to the establishment of mandatory school-attendance in 1880) must have contributed to the strengthening of middle-class interest in Greek literature, given the significance of classical education in the organisation of the curriculum.[147] Still, only a limited number of men whose social background can be located in the middle classes became active translators of Greek works: those who were able to avoid an involvement in business and commerce, and pursue instead scholarly interests.

As for women of the middle- and upper-classes, one can quickly conclude that they did not normally acquire a knowledge of Greek. Well-known cases of women with good classical education, such as Elizabeth Barrett, Sara Coleridge and Mary Shelley, are exceptions to the conditions of the period. It seems, however, that a fair number of women felt the need to familiarise themselves with Greek literature, not least because of the prestige classical studies acquired during the century. Thus, they also chose to read translations, especially those published in the so-called "Family libraries".[148] Reviewers of such collections considered women as a significant readership they needed to address; the anonymous reviewer of Valpy's library, for example, stressed the role of the publication in the cultivation of "the minds of women" and its contribution to the improvement of a domestic life that pertains to a civilized social context (1830: 143). Women who ventured to translate from the Greek were disappointingly few during the nineteenth century,[149] especially

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[145] Murray published several new translations of Greek poetry among which were Bland's translations in the *Greek Anthology* (1813[1]; 1833), T. Mitchell's successful translations of Aristophanes (1820) and Sotheby's translation of the *Iliad* (1831). This information is taken from Romberg 1981: 65-66.

[146] While this issue has not been the object of systematic research, it is I think justified to accept Romberg's suggestion that it seems unlikely that the most successful periodicals of the nineteenth century and the best publishers of the time would have continued to publish such numbers of articles on Greek literature as well as Greek literature in translation, unless these works could attract the interest of a wider public located in the middle classes (1981: 67).

[147] On this issue see Clarke 1959: 74-97, Bowen 1989: 171-172.

[148] On this issue see Romberg 1981: 67-82 and Jenkyns 1980: 63-64.

[149] It is not always easy to identify women as translators in a period when the names of translators do not always appear in full and in many cases are omitted. According to a preliminary research, based on Foster's bibliography,

when compared to women writers of original literature[150] or translators from modern languages.[151]

The first of the above groups, i.e. the traditional aristocracy and gentry, had long ago considered some knowledge of the classics as part of its education at the public schools, Oxford and Cambridge. But more than this, many aspects of Greek literature had been rewritten and translated during the previous centuries in ways that accorded with this group's dominant position in the context of an authoritarian social organisation and politics. The interpretation of Aristotle's *Ethics* and Sophocles' *Antigone* from a Christian perspective[152] or the rewriting of 'democracy' as a condition of anarchy are indicative examples of an approach to Greek literature which survived during the first part of the nineteenth century and was closely connected with the worldview, interests and social status of the aristocratic ruling classes.

This approach, however, will be found to be short-lived. Since already the first decades of the century translations of classical Greek works shaped a discursive space that became associated with the ideology and interests of middle-class men in two interrelated ways: as articulations of a thought-mode that could challenge the authoritative power of the aristocratic elite and as a form of cultural capital that could be appropriated by the middle-classes. Translations acquired a central position in the target polysystem through a move by which classical Greek culture and polity, and conceptions of 'democracy' in particular, came to express precisely those values and ideas that strengthened the reorganisation of the target society and the social role of the middle classes within it.

The agents of this move, i.e. translators of ancient Greek, cannot, however, be merely identified with the bourgeoisie, not least because the overwhelming majority of middle class men lacked any knowledge of the source language and was predominantly engaged in

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the catalogues of the British Library and information collected from secondary sources, I could identify the following translations written by women during the nineteenth century, which are, with only one exception, all translations of poetry, and chiefly tragedy: [Barrett Elizabeth] (1833) *Prometheus Bound. Translated from the Greek of Aeschylus, and Miscellaneous Poems by the Translator, Author of 'An Essay on Mind etc.* London (Reprinted 1896); Swanwick, Anna (1848) *The Dramas of Aeschylus.* London: Bohn Classical Library, Swanwick, Anna (1865) *The Agamemnon, Choephori, and Eumenides of Aeschylus.* London. (*Agamemnon* only was reprinted in 1900); Weber Augusta (1866) *Prometheus Vinctus* ed. by Thomas Webster; Weber Augusta (1868) *Euripides' Medea. Translated into English Verse.*; [Vardil, Anna Jane] (1809) *Poems and Translations from the Minor Greek Poets, and Others: Written Chiefly between the Ages of Ten and Sixteen.* By a Lady. London; Ware [Mary] of Warehill (1809) *Poems, Consisting of Translations from the Greek, Latin and Italian, with some Originals.* London; Chatterton (1862) *Selections [from Plato] by Lady Chatterton.* London. Although this list does not claim to be complete, its length – even as the result of preliminary research – is indicative of the absence of a substantial number of women translators of the classics during this period. To my knowledge, there is no systematic work on the topic.

[150] Cf. Leighton 1996; Stevenson 1993.

[151] Cf. Stark 1999.

[152] This issue will be analysed in chapters 5 and 6.

occupations which were hardly compatible with this kind of intellectual enterprise.[153] The writers of translations could more accurately be defined as a different group, which does not develop outside class divisions, but nevertheless entertains a distinct and non-direct relation to them: that of the 'men of letters' or 'intellectuals'. The 'intellectual' (a category that was established in this period, both as a concept and as a social group[154]) was someone who was presumed to possess "a high degree of understanding"[155] and to entertain a relation to truth and justice that is at once higher to that of the majorities and unrestricted by political interests or biases. As Foucault puts it, the intellectual is the figure who is produced within modern discourses as a master of truth and value which can and must be applied universally. He is "the man of justice, the man of law, who counterposes to power, despotism and the abuses and arrogance of wealth the universality of justice and the equity of an ideal law" (1980: 128).

Translators of classical texts are accurately described by this definition. Their work was assumed to express a conception of truth and justice that was dissociated from partial social interests and could be accepted as legitimate by the society as a whole. Such a conviction was extensively articulated by a persistent evocation of translation-fidelity,[156] which enabled the appropriation of the authority of the source texts, on the grounds of an assumed transparency[157] and neutrality of the translation process. John Stuart Mill's description of his translations of Plato's *Dialogues* is indicative of approaches to this issue during the nineteenth century: "It is the object of these papers", Mill wrote, "not to explain or criticise Plato, *but to allow him to speak for himself*" (1834[1]; 1978: 60 my italics). From a similar perspective, Matthew Arnold's essay on the translation of Homer employed a religious vocabulary in order to stress at once the fidelity and transcendence of a good

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[153] The position of the classics in the educational institutions of the period should not be taken to entail an incontestable interest in the subject or an unquestionable conviction as regards the usefulness of classical learning in the training of future businessmen or manufacturers. During the nineteenth-century the government was frequently criticised for the narrowness and ineffectiveness of an almost exclusively classical curriculum and towards the middle of the century there was a strong demand for the systematic introduction of sciences in secondary education. At the beginning of the 1860s a committee that was appointed in order to deal with this issue (Westminster and Edinburgh committee) recognised the need to introduce science in the school curriculum, but also declared its conviction "that the best material available to Englishmen ... are furnished by the languages and literature of Greece and Rome" (Bowen 1989: 172).

[154] As Raymond Williams maintains, 'intellectual' as a noun to indicate a particular kind of person who is doing a particular kind of work, that is, a category of people, dates effectively from the early nineteenth century (1976[1]; 1988: 169). T. W. Heyck endorses this view when he argues that "the Victorian years ... witnessed the origin of the *idea* as well as the *vocabulary* of 'the intellectuals'" (1982: 15). According to the OED the first use of the term with this meaning dates back to 1819. (s.v. 'intellectual').

[155] Cf. OED s.v. 'intellectual'.

[156] For a further discussion of conceptions of translation fidelity during this period see Bassnett 1980[1], 1991: 68-73.

[157] My use of the term is different to the notion of transparency as is defined by Venuti in terms of 'domestication' and 'naturalisation' of translations (1995: 1-42). The term is here employed in order to refer to a metatranslation discourse, which describes translation as a means through which one can see the original, rather than a 'domesticating' translation practice.

translation. Arnold defined an ideal translation of Homer by drawing a parallel between the "union of the translator with his original" and the "union of the human soul with the divine essence", which could take place, in his view, "when the mist which stands between them [the translator and the original] – the mist of alien modes of thinking, speaking, and feeling on the translator's part – 'defecates to a pure transparency', and disappears" (1860-61[1]; 1960: 103). What this vocabulary ensured was not merely the presumed accuracy of translations. In a context that was profoundly marked by social insecurity, conflict and ideological turmoil, Mill's and Arnold's metatranslation discourse gave a promise of truth that could prescribe and regulate social relations by virtue of its supposedly universal legitimacy. The status of the source texts together with claims to translation fidelity were evoked in order to ascertain the translation's capacity to articulate and codify this truth, to recover a discourse of transcendence.

In many ways the claim to universality was more significant for nineteenth-century intellectuals than assertions of faithfulness, and the latter was often sacrificed for the sake of the former. As the translator of Plato, Benjamin Jowett, stated towards the end of the century, a good translation should be faithful only to the extent that the source text itself satisfies an ideal of transcendence. This means that the translator should be allowed to change and correct the original in order to avoid reproducing signs of partiality or intellectual weakness. He should be able to rewrite the source text as the author would have written it, had he constantly fulfilled the requirements of a universal model:

> In some cases, where the order is confused, the expression feeble, the emphasis misplaced, or the sense somewhat faulty, he [the translator] will not strive in his rendering to reproduce these characteristics, but will re-write the passage as the author [Plato] would have written it at first, had he not been 'nodding' (1892: xvi).

The role of these statements was crucial for both the canonisation of translations within the British polysystem and their function as a moral and political standard in the target society. Evocations of universality not only legitimised the dominant position of these works in the target cultural context; they further acted to present the translations as expressions of a social model that could provide a disoriented, ideologically confused and still uncertain audience with lines of intellectual, moral and political guidance. In a period in which fixed social standards and relations were constantly challenged and questioned, the role of men of letters, as T.W. Heyck and Eagleton suggest, was precisely to help their readership through

the troubles of economic, social and religious change, by providing models of stability and harmony in a society that was deeply marked by internal conflict and instability.[158]

Formed within and by conditions of social antagonism, such a discourse was far from being able to fulfil its promises: it was far from being either faithful to the originals or universalisable. Despite claims to the contrary, translations from the classics changed and rewrote the source texts in ways that will be found to articulate the thought-mode and values that pertain to modern bourgeois societies and the social interests of the middle classes within them. From this perspective, translators of classical texts sustain Gramsci's conception of 'organic intellectuals': the thinkers who are not isolated from historical societies and political interests within them, but are created together with a social group, emerge "organically" out of it, and "give it homogeneity and an awareness of its own function not only in the economic, but also in the social and political fields (1929-35[1]; 1971: 5).

Hence, the work of these translators, as will be argued in the next sections, developed as an answer to a necessity: it aimed to fill in a gap, an absence of a discourse which could justify the social and political domination of the middle classes, by providing them with an authoritative predecessor and a legitimate model for the social and political organisation of the target society. This gap was not, however, the product of a structural, but of an historical necessity: the need of a newly constructed bourgeoisie to imagine a past for a social world that had, up to that moment, no tradition upon which it could lean back and no authorised ancestors which could justify its validity. But more than this, translations from the classics stemmed from the necessity to establish a unifying and consolidating discourse in a class society that was not only formed on the basis of social opposition, but was also in possession of the conceptual means, by which this opposition could be grounded on historical causes and be resolved in ways that would transform existing social structures and relations. The presumably unmediated and privileged access of the translations to the source texts together with their assumed capacity to transfer these texts intact in the target context enabled them to build up models of social balance that acted to elicit the 'consensus' of the wider reading public as regards the constitution of a social order, which the majority of this community had both objective needs and reasons to change.

2.2 Altering Norms, Translation and Politics: The Establishment of Liberal Democracy

After the beginning of the nineteenth century, English translations of Greek literature constituted a prototypical expression of the duality of the discourses of modern bourgeois

[158] For a further discussion of this issue see Eagleton 1984: 45-49; Heyck 1982: 36-38.

societies, in the sense that they oscillated between authoritarian social ideals and the convictions of an enlightened and liberal politics.

The first translation of Thucydides' *History* during this period was written by S. T. Bloomfield in 1829. Unlike both Hobbes and Smith, the translator was not overtly hostile to democratic politics. He rather presented his work as an endorsement of the political mixture of aristocracy and democracy achieved by the British constitution. His translation, as he stated, aimed

> to illustrate the evils of *unbalanced democracy*, and to show the necessity of that *happily-attempted mixture* of aristocracy and democracy, which however might float in the imaginations of ancient theorists, was never actually embodied, but in the *British Constitution* (1829: vi).

From this perspective, Bloomfield rewrote Pericles' definition of democracy as follows:

> From the government being administered, not for *the few*, but for *the many* [our institution] is denominated a democracy (ibid. 366-7).

The rendering of the 'many' by the term 'multitude' (suggested by Hobbes) is missing from this translation and will not appear again in translations of the passage. What is more, Bloomfield did not describe democracy as a government which has regard for the many as much as the few or makes political decisions in accordance with the interests of the society as a whole (as had been suggested by Smith's translation). In his work, a democratic government is claimed to be administered *not* for the few, but for the many. That is to say, democracy is not only posited in a social context in which the aims of the few are opposed to those of the many, but also seeks to prioritise the latter over the former.

Bloomfield's emphasis on this opposition, which played a less crucial role in translations written during the previous centuries, expresses a significant change in European conceptions of society and politics, which was crystallised in the British context after the French Revolution. Before 1789, British intellectuals and political theorists were able to perceive of and represent their immediate reality of social conflict (as Hobbes most evidently did in the *Leviathan*), but nevertheless believed that it would be possible to resolve this conflict by moderate reforms, which would establish a political alliance between the aristocracy and the middle classes without being threatening to the existing *status quo*. The outbreak of the revolution, the September massacres of 1792, the execution of Louis XVI in 1793 and the images of the Terror dispersed this idea.[159] Since the beginning of the nineteenth century, conceptions of democracy indicated an understanding of Western societies as

[159] For a further discussion of the impact of the French revolution on British scholarly and literary circles see Dawson 1993: 50-53.

fragmented and divided; as structured on the basis of conflictual rather than harmonious and reconcilable interests. By that moment, it had become evident that the goals of the many in modern bourgeois societies could not easily accord with the goals of the few.

This realisation did not, however, entail an immediate endorsement of democratic ideas. Quite the contrary; the more the 'many' seemed to claim social recognition and power, the stronger the negations of a fully developed democracy became.[160] Hence, Bloomfield's translation of Thucydides not only repeated the distinction between the government and the governed that was established by Hobbes' and Smith's works; it further denied that classical Athens was *really* a democratic polity. The translation of the passage in question was then further qualified by a footnote, which suggested that Pericles' description "might be a good definition of the Athenian government as far as it was *supposed* to be". Yet the Athenian polity was only "a democracy in name", Broomfield pointed out. "In fact" it was "a modification of aristocracy called elective monarchy" (ibid.: 367).[161]

As the century progressed, the fear of the people and of revolution became weaker. While this fear did not vanish before the end of the century, as Eric Hobsbawm has argued, it was recognised already before the 1850s that liberal democracy, whose political form would be a parliamentary constitution based on a wide suffrage, was "inevitable, but also that it would probably be a nuisance but politically harmless" (1975: 15). In this context, Bloomfield's dispute of the Athenian polity was not repeated until the end of the century. Instead, classical democracy became the central reference of liberal and utilitarian thinkers, in whose writings the Athenian society was transformed from an object of fear and denial into a model for imitation.

This turn was substantially advanced by a significant publication on the *History of Greece*, written by George Grote over a period of ten years, from 1846 to 1856. Grote's *History* had an unprecedented success in the British and European intellectual circles, and was quickly recognised as a major contribution to both classical scholarship and the fostering of democratic ideals (Cf. Momigliano 1952: 13; Turner 1981: 213-214).[162] In this work, Grote not only presented extensive translated passages in order to sustain his appraisal of democratic Athens; he also employed translation in the formation of his historical vocabulary,

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[160] It is not a coincidence that this period witnesses the coinage of terms which indicate the fear of the 'mob', such as mobocracy. Cf. OED s.v. 'mobocracy'.

[161] A similar idea is presented in T. Mitchell's introduction to his translation of the Comedies of Aristophanes. Mitchell presents his translations as a testimony of the dangers of democratic politics, against which one should juxtapose, in his view, "a constitution so nicely balanced as our own", which carefully avoids "any exclusive view of politics" and prevents social conflicts and divisions (1820: xii-xiii).

and described, for example, Pericles as the "prime minister" of the Athenian Assembly, and the Athenian politics as defined by the oppositions among the "conservative party" and the party of "reformers" (1846-56[1]; 1888: 4. 454). As a result, the Athenian democracy was perceived as a mirror-image of English society and politics, it lost previous connotations of anarchy and injustice, and provided, as Turner suggested, frequent occasion for political narcissism (1981: 234).

Grote's *History* became so influential at the time that after the middle of the nineteenth century most portrayals of classical Athens were inclined to employ a vocabulary that assimilated the classical to the modern world and viewed Athens as the infant stage of nineteenth-century civil culture and liberal politics. As James Talboys Wheeler wrote in 1855, Athens represents the history of

> a richly endowed people, learning the arts of self-government and free inquiry with the rapidity of an infant prodigy, and springing in a little more than a century from the depths of ignorance and political degradation to the loftiest heights of intellectual greatness and constitutional freedom (1855, 1: 247-248).

John Stuart Mill wrote two eulogising reviews of Grote's *History*, both of which fostered an association between the modern world and the Athenian democracy. In the first of these works, Mill stated that the roots of modern European nations do not lie with their natural ancestors, but with the Greeks: the "originators of political freedom and the grand exemplars and sources of it to modern Europe". The battle of Marathon, he argued, "even as an event in English history is more important than the battle of Hastings" (1846[1]; 1978: 273).[163] Athens came to be seen as both a cultural and political model for British society. What is more, these two aspects of the Athenian society, i.e. culture and politics, were for the first time understood as closely interrelated. Democracy was conceived of as the basis of classical civilisation, while the latter was described as the natural outcome of democratic politics: the progress of Athens in the arts, sciences and philosophy, as Mill argued, had been shown by Grote to be the result of the Athenian democratic polity, which established "liberty" and "the unimpeded authority of law" (1853[1]; 1978: 316).

But what did democracy mean for these writers? And how did translations of ancient Greek texts serve to sustain its meaning? Mill's appraisal of Athens in the above reviews was justified by the quotation of a further translation of Thucydides (ibid.: 317-319), which had

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[162] Grote himself was actively involved in nineteenth-century politics and became a member of the House of Commons in 1833, as part of the circle of the philosophic radicals which included Jeremy Bentham, James and John Stuart Mill. On this issue see Hamburger's *Intellectuals in Politics* (1965) and Clarke 1962.

[163] For a further discussion of conceptions of the Athenian democracy by the English Utilitarians see Pappé 1979.

been made by Grote himself and had been included in his *History of Greece*. This work defined democracy as follows:

> It [our constitution] is called a democracy, since *its permanent aim tends towards the Many and not towards the Few* (1846-56[1]; 1888:5. 67 my italics)

The translation transforms the original phrase "καὶ ὄνομα μὲν διὰ τὸ μὴ ἐς ὀλίγους ἀλλ' ἐς πλείονας οἰκεῖν δημοκρατία κέκληται" into the rather vague assertion that democracy is a form of government whose "permanent aim tends towards the Many and not towards the Few". This means that it differs from Hobbes' work, since it recognises the majority as the "aim" of democratic government, while Hobbes restricted democratic processes to a government's 'consideration' of the needs of the multitude. Yet it also follows its predecessors, by suggesting that this 'aim' would not be sought by the 'many', but by an institution that is strictly separated from the social body of citizens, i.e. the government.

In the middle of the nineteenth century, Henry Dale wrote a similar translation of the source text:

> In name, from its not being administered for the benefit of the few, but of the many, it [our form of government] is called a democracy (1848. 112).

Dale's work introduced into this definition the notion of 'benefit', which had been more implied than said in all of the previous translations, and suggested that democracy's aim must serve the benefit of the many. Still it continued to set up a distinction between the 'many', who do not actively pursue this benefit, and the government itself. In a partial translation of Pericles' speech, Ernest Jones followed Dale's rendering of the passage, without, however, acknowledging his source (1867[1]; 1885: 47). Subsequently, Richard Crawley's translation defined the Athenian polity as founded on a government "whose administration ... favours the many instead of the few" (1876:1.121).

Neither the source text nor the history of classical Athens could justify such a division between the few and the many. The Athenian democracy was administered on the basis of direct participation of citizens in the Assembly, which decided on all significant political issues, from legislation to finance and military matters. In the context of the Assembly, the Athenian citizens (i.e. male and Athenian born adults over the age of 20) were considered as moral and political equals and were all responsible for the government of the city. It follows that in the source context the concept of democracy conveyed the idea of direct, free and equal participation of all citizens in the institution of public affairs.[164] This meaning was not

[164] This point does not imply that classical democracy was not formed on the basis of an exclusionist politics. The 'many' in classical Athens were still the 'minority' of the population of the city, since women and slaves were deprived of any political rights. Slaves were not 'citizens', while Athenian free women were regarded as 'citizens' only in order to legitimate the recognition of their citizen-sons, and had no right to participate in politics. These

reproduced in the translations. From Hobbes' to Crawley's works, democracy was represented as a form of political organisation by which the majorities are governed in a way that takes into consideration or prioritises their interests, but do not themselves acquire political power.

After the first decades of the nineteenth century this transformation did not, however, entail a negation of the value or existence of the Athenian democracy. It rather crystallised a significant change of the meaning of the concept, which brought about the identification of classical democracy with the principles of liberal democratic politics. What this transformation implied was that democracy was dissociated at once from the idea of social equality and the notion of popular political power. The key concept that defined its meaning became individual liberty: the freedom to participate in elections and articulate political opinions publicly, as well as the liberty to pursue one's goals and secure one's rights in the context of civil society. These forms of liberty were described by Crawley's introduction to his translation as the main features of the Athenian democracy. As he stated, the reader of his work could find in the presentation of Athens "the *political freedom* which he glories in, and the *social liberty* which he sometimes sighs for" (1876: 1. xi, my italics). Equality became thereby understood as electoral equality (political freedom) and equality of opportunity (social liberty): the right of all people to compete over the attainment of social status, political power or economic growth, irrespective of their initial social position or rank. As Mill put it in theoretical terms in his "Thoughts on Parliamentary Reform",

> In a democracy ... there is no contended poverty. No one being forced to remain poor; many who were poor daily becoming rich, and the comforts of life being apparently within the reach of all, the desire to appropriate them descends to the very lowest rank (1859[1], 1875: 53).

Democracy, in other words, was defined as the political system which secures the conditions for social mobility and imposes no apparent obstacles to people's desire to appropriate goods, reach higher social positions or attain political power. This system was not incompatible with poverty itself and the existence of social and political divisions. Mill only opposes "forced" poverty: the restriction of the right to seek individual advancement and profit. The establishment of this social and material freedom, as Arthur Partridge pointed out in his work

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exclusions notwithstanding, the Athenian Assembly, to which Pericles refers in Thucydides' text, was indeed the key political body of Athens and was responsible for the government of the city. For a further discussion of 'citizenship' and 'participation' in classical Athens see Sinclair 1988: 24-135. An historical approach to the Athenian democracy which focuses on the institutional and social conditions that enabled the establishment of democratic polity can be found in Davies 1978[1]; 1993: 87-116; Stockton 1990: 57-116; 165-188, and Glotz 1929: 117-263. For a social history of classical democracy see Croix 1981: 3-30; 205-326; Jones 1957: 3-20, and Anderson P. 1974: 29-44. For a discussion of the ideological aspects of ancient democratic thought see Boegehold and Scafuro 1994. For a discussion of the social and political status of women in classical Athens see

On Democracy (published one year before the Second Reform Act) stands as the foundation of democratic equality in modern societies:

> Material freedom means also equality. It means freedom to get, to spend and to save wealth. In other words, freedom of trade, direct taxation, and economical and honest government. All three are inextricably bound together as a free system (1866: 349).

It was precisely this understanding of democracy that enabled Grote to state in his translation that the Athenian city did not bestow political and constitutional power on the people, but enabled social advancement and chose only those citizens of "real worth" as governors. As the source text reads:

> ... μέτεστι δὲ κατὰ μὲν τοὺς νόμους πρὸς τὰ ἴδια διάφορα πάσι τὸ ἴσον, κατὰ δὲ τὴν ἀξίωσην ὡς ἕκαστος ἔν τῳ εὐδοκιμεῖ οὐκ ἀπὸ μέρους τὸ πλέον ἐς τὰ κοινὰ ἢ ἀπ' ἀρετῆς προτιμᾶται (II. xxxvii).

Grote translated the passage as follows:

> As to private matters and disputes, the laws deal equally with every man, while in regard to public affairs and to *claims of individual influence*, *every man's chance of advancement* is determined not by party favour *but by real worth*, according as his reputation stands in his own particular department (1846-56[1]; 1888:5 67 my italics).[165]

The translation maintained the meaning of the first phrase of the passage, which refers to the equality of citizens before the laws as regards private disputes. The rest of the passage was substantially transformed by the employment of the concept of "individual influence", which is absent from the source text, and the use of the phrase "every man's chance of advancement is determined ... by real worth ...", which rewrote the source-text idea that every man's chance of attaining a position of political responsibility is determined by his ability to perform the particular task. Both of these choices stem from an understanding of democracy that pertains more to nineteenth-century liberal convictions than to classical political institutions. For the Athenians, to be in positions of political responsibility was not equivalent to the idea of *personal* advancement or influence. The members of the Athenian *Voulē*, a body of five hundred citizens who were responsible for the administration of issues that were not discussed in the *Ecclēssia*, were elected by lot. Their position was considered as predominantly administrative, had a relatively low salary and did not entail the attainment of political power, since all important decisions on public matters had to be endorsed by the *Ecclēsia*. Participation in the supreme court of justice, the *Hēliaia* was open to every

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Pomeroy 1975: 57-119, and Walker 1983. For the development of democratic politics after the fifth century see Hansen 1991. For a comparison between ancient and modern democracies see Finley 1973[1]; 1985

[165] Compare to: "When it is a question of putting one person before another in positions of public responsibility, what counts is not membership of a particular class, but the actual ability which the man possesses" (Warner 1954[1]; 1972: 145)

Athenian citizen over the age of thirty. The *Ecclēsia* had the absolute right to force citizens to leave public positions, if they were deemed to be unfit for their responsibilities. What is more, no citizen had the right to attain a position in the public administration more than once or – in the case of participants in the *Voulē* – twice in his lifetime. This law prohibited the association of such positions with the fulfilment of political ambitions of individuals.[166] It follows that Grote's idea that democracy enables "individual advancement", irrespective of political affiliations ("party favour") and the social status that pertains to them, could only make sense against the background of liberal politics, which conceived of democracy as identical to the establishment of freedom for competition, rather than the Athenian historical context.

But more than this, Grote's translation entailed the negation of the source-text's idea that all members of a democratic community have both the right and obligation for equal participation in politics. The Athenian political model was based on the assumption that men could fulfil themselves only in and through the *polis*, on the maxim that the "virtue of the individual is the same as the virtue of the citizen" (Jäger 1933[1];1965: 2.157). The rights and obligations of citizens in Athenian society followed, as Held puts it, from their existence *qua* citizens. They were not individual, but public rights and duties (1996:17). This decisive trait of classical democracy was testified, as I argued, by Thucydides' description of the Athenian citizen as a man who "participates" in the institution of the *polis* (II. xl). Grote translated the passage in question as follows:

> the private citizen, while engaged in professional business, *has competent knowledge on public affairs*. For we stand alone in regarding the man who keeps aloof from these latter not as harmless, but as useless. Moreover *we always hear and pronounce on public matters when discussed by our leaders, or perhaps strike out for ourselves correct reasoning about them* (1846-56[1]; 1888: 5. 69).[167]

Unlike Hobbes, Grote maintained the idea that the Athenians regarded as useless any man who abstained from public affairs. Yet his rewriting of the last phrase of the passage (which states that "we Athenians take our own decisions on policy or submit them to proper discussion"[168]) by the assertion that the Athenians hear and pronounce on public matters when discussed by their leaders or may develop for themselves correct reasoning about them, effected a significant transformation of the source text. The Athenians were presented in the translation as having a passive role in the determination of political issues, as a community which listens and chooses, but does not actively plan a certain politics. It hears and endorses,

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[166] For a further discussion of these issues see Glotz (1929), especially chapters 4 and 6.
[167] The source text is quoted in the first part of this chapter

but does not participate in political discussions. No aspect of the source text could legitimise such a division between the "leaders" of the city and the people who abstain from political deliberation.

It is important to understand that the logic that informed Grote's translation was in accordance with the ideals of liberal democracy and was not considered to entail an oppression of the people or the establishment of an authoritarian politics. The key notion that defined liberal politics was 'freedom', not equality. Egalitarian and libertarian politics, as Norberto Bobbio has argued, may have converged at marginal points, but are also rooted in profoundly oppositional conceptions of human beings and society, namely conceptions which have been individualistic, conflictual and pluralistic for the liberal; totalising, harmonious and monistic for the egalitarian. In other words, the chief goal for the liberal is the happiness of the individual, even if the wealthier and more talented achieve this happiness at the expense of poorer and less gifted. On the contrary, the chief goal for the egalitarian is the advancement of an entire community, which may often entail significant constrictions in the sphere of individual freedom (1988[1]; 1990: 32-33). Hence from Grote's perspective, the two main ideas articulated in his translation, that is, the relation of democracy to 'free' social advancement (which implied the integration of liberal democracy into a system of social hierarchies) as well as the dissociation of democratic politics from the actual bestowal of power on the people, constituted the very meaning of democracy and were not antithetical to it. On the same grounds, Grote totally identified the Athenian democracy with liberal aristocracy, when he stated in an anonymously published review that

> it is to democracy alone (*and to that sort of open aristocracy which is, practically, very similar to it*) that we owe that unparalleled brilliance and diversity of individual talent which constitutes the charm and glory of Grecian history (1826: 280, my italics).

Likewise, John Stuart Mill was convinced that democracy should not entail the self-institution of a community, but the consensual establishment of an educated and progressive elite as the political and cultural leader of a people. "The idea of a rational democracy", he asserted, "is not that the people themselves govern, but that they have security for good government ... the best government (need it be said?) must be the government of the wisest, and these must always be a few" (Burns 1969:294).

Two main arguments justified this position. The first was that social liberty was not compatible with a political system that ensured the full and equal participation of all citizens in political government. For such a system, it was argued, would act to oppress the rights of

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[168] This translation is made by Warner 1954[1]; 1972. 147

minorities and become detrimental for the progress of the entire social body, by institutionalising as laws the will and intentions of the most uneducated and less worthy of its members. Secondly, it was suggested that the true interests of the majorities could neither be discerned nor pursued by them, but had to be defined and reconciled with the interests of minorities by a representative government that was trained for the purpose. Hence the reasoning behind Grote's argument was that democracy itself had to be protected from its inherent tendency to bring about a tyranny of the mob.

This idea, which underlay the various traditions of European liberalism, was initially expressed by Alexis de Tocqueville (1805-1859) in his highly influential book[169] *Democracy in America*. In this work Tocqueville drew attention to the dangerous and despotic nature of the multitude in a democracy, which is unable to distance itself from petty pleasures and banal interests, and is always in need of a protective power that would secure it from its passions:

> I am trying to imagine under what novel features despotism may appear in the world. In the first place, I see an innumerable multitude of men, alike and equal, constantly circling around in pursuit of the petty and banal pleasures with which they glut their souls (1835-1840[1], 1968: 2. 898).

From a similar perspective, Mill, who often praised Tocqueville's work (Cf. Mill 1840[1]; 1859), asserted that "the tyranny of the majority is now generally included among the evils against which society requires to be on its guard" (1859[1]; 1989: 8) and argued for the necessity of political divisions (which he extended to the field of electoral rights) in any political system that sought to protect democracy and liberty. As he maintained in his "Thoughts on Parliamentary Reform",

> There is no such thing in morals as a *right* to power over others, and the electoral suffrage is that power. When all have votes, it will be both just in principle and necessary in fact, that some mode be adopted of giving greater weight to the suffrage of the educated voter, some means by which the more intrinsically valuable member of society ... be singled out, and allowed a superiority of influence proportioned to his higher qualifications (1859[1], 1875: 21)

Democracy, it was stated, is a system of government which does not only leave intact historical distinctions between 'educated' and 'uneducated', 'valuable' and 'worthless', 'superior' and 'inferior' members of the social body; it further necessitates the bestowal of greater electoral power on citizens who are "intrinsically valuable" and better qualified, in order to avoid the imposition of the power of the uneducated majority on others.

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[169] On the reception of Tocqueville's work at the time see Mayer 1968.

This form of political organisation accorded, in Mill's view, with the will and interests of the entire social body, since it authorised the most capable members of the community to handle public affairs for the benefit of the less educated ones. "There is no one", Mill argued, "who would not rather have his affairs managed by a person of greater knowledge and intelligence, than by one of less." "There is no one who, if he was obliged to confide his interest jointly to both, would not desire to give a more potential voice to the more educated and more cultivated of the two" (ibid.: 20). What is more, liberal democracy, as Mill suggested in his review of Tocqueville's book, ensures the development of the society as a whole, by enabling the development of industry and commerce and the increase of profit for the greatest numbers: "A nation is advancing in prosperity", Mill argued, when the industry is expanding, ... its capital rapidly augmenting [and] the number of those who possess capital increases". Such a growing "equality", which is secured by a democratic polity, "is one of the features of progressive civilisation" (1840[1]; 1859: 63). From this point of view, democracy was defined in precisely those terms that were expressed in Grote's translation: the system that secures the attainment of "individual influence", social and economic "advancement" for all of its members who do not possess privileges by rank or status, but have the means to pursue their goals, accumulate profit and compete over the attainment of positions of power.

Two fundamental suppositions underwrote this view of society and politics: the necessity of social hierarchies and the desirability of free competition and antagonism. These were considered by Mill as the basis of democratic politics and the foundation of social and cultural progress. No community, he argued, can avoid stagnation, backwardness and inertia, no community "has ever long continued to be progressive, but while a conflict was going on between the stronger power in the community and some rival power":

> between the spiritual and temporal authorities; the military or territorial and the industrious classes; the king and the people; the orthodox and the religious reformers (1861[1]; 1972: 268).

Hobbes and Madison after him conceived of conflict as an inevitable, yet detrimental feature of social communities that had to be controlled and restricted by the authority of the government. Grote and Mill saw conflict as the basis of social freedom and the source of cultural and political development. Their vocabulary is strongly reminiscent of Kant's understanding of antagonism as the natural feature of human societies and the means for the realisation of a free and civilised community. From a similar perspective, Grote and Mill conceived of conflict as the key for the establishment of freedom and civil rights (the right to oppose absolute authority and pursue one's goals irrespective of restraints imposed by class divisions) and the means to instigate intellectual and material progress. Democracy, as was

stated by Grote's translation and Mill's rewritings, could set up the rightful political framework for the development of this conflict and the distribution of political power on the basis of free competition among citizens presumed to be moral and political equals.

When posited against a context of actual historical inequalities of British society – a context which established neither the freedom nor the equal chances of participants in competitive social relations – the above claims seem suspiciously distanced from the radical potentials of modern democratic ideals. Democracy, liberty and equality are restricted and reformed in ways that question their very validity and come to oppose their meaning and function. They form and sustain a social system that is fraught by tensions and contradictions, since its founding premises are intrinsically threatened by the conditions they themselves articulate and legitimise: a division of labour accompanied by the establishment of certain occupations as more valuable than others and a legitimation of social as well as political distinctions and hierarchies.

These ideals, we are told, form a model of politics that is addressed to all social members: governors and governed, privileged and oppressed, dominant and dominated. The key feature of democracy is claimed to be found in its assumed neutrality, its roots in a thought-mode that serves no partial interests, participates in no conflict, and pertains to an overarching condition of civilisation and social progress for the society as a whole. Yet by identifying civilisation with civil society and by endorsing divisions established in the civil context, such conceptions of democracy did not speak for the interests of all members of a community. Instead, they set up a model of social organisation that was based on social hierarchies, inequality and the profound loss of freedom for the majority of its members. Such a condition, as Mill pointed out in his *Representative Government*, was seen as a necessary "price" for a civilised society, which had to prepare the material and intellectual world of civilisation by "continuous labour of an unexciting kind" undertaken by the majorities. Without such an arrangement, Mill claimed, there can be neither social progress nor the material conditions required by civilisation. Hence the society which would choose to limit the freedom of the least capable and qualified citizens is ultimately justified by Mill on the grounds that this measure leads to the attainment of a higher freedom and a more civilised community:

> even personal slavery, by giving a commencement to industrial life, and enforcing it as the exclusive occupation of the most numerous portion of the community, may accelerate the transition to a better freedom than of fighting and rapine (1861[1], 1972: 198)

The crucial point not to be missed in this statement is that personal slavery is not the fate of all social members. In Mill's view, it pertains to the work and life of the lower classes, the

most numerous portion of the community, which must ensure that democracy is not dissociated from its natural context of "civilised society" (ibid.: 200). Thus, democratic politics come to sustain "civilisation" by justifying those rules that enable the development of industry and commerce and the means for the peaceful regulation of social conflict and antagonism: laws "for protecting persons and property ... [which] are sufficiently perfect to maintain peace" among citizens and "induce the bulk of the community to rely for their security mainly upon social arrangements" (1836[1]; 1859: 162). Democracy is thereby called to sustain those very conditions that establish and perpetuate sociopolitical inequality in modern bourgeois societies: the right to private property, the division of labour and the distinction between political government and the majority of the people.

2.3 A Model for Social Assent: Ancient Greek Culture as a Unifying Social Force

Nineteenth-century thought on democracy is best described not in terms of a linear development, but as a range of intersecting, complementary, but also antithetical discursive formations. The spirit of liberal reform that defined democratic ideals during the first part of the century became stronger and more powerful in the period that preceded the Second Reform Act in 1867. Democracy was recognised at the time as the inevitable outcome of social progress and the central corollary of modern civilisation. As an anonymous writer of *The Westminster Review* argued,

> The organisation of democracy is the work which the past has made ready for the present and the future to complete. Since the first signs of decay appeared in the feudal system, the whole course of Western civilisation has tended toward the end: every scientific discovery [and] ... every political advance ... has assisted in its turn to level ranks and to diffuse power (1867b: 479).

A similar position was argued by Matthew Arnold in his lecture "Democracy", which suggested that the rapid expansion of democracy in Europe is an operation of nature that "merits neither blame nor praise". It nevertheless requires adequate preparation for its establishment. This could be achieved, in Arnold's view, through the appropriate education of the chief agents of democratisation, i.e. the middle and lower classes (1861[1]; 1962: 7-8, 20-21).

In this context a new role was bestowed on the classical tradition. Greek literature was established as the source of 'higher' political ideals (which were claimed to be missing from the education of the majorities) and the field at which aristocratic and bourgeois classes could reconcile and partly harmonise their social claims. Arnold expressed the key features of this tendency, which was articulated as an anxiety to direct and instruct the masses so that they

could advance democratic reforms in ways that would not be threatening to social unity and coherence. For Arnold, the main problem posited by the advent of democracy in modern times was "how to find and keep high ideals", given that the people are

> the bulk of them, persons who need to follow an ideal, not to set one, and the ideal of greatness, high feeling, and fine culture, which an aristocracy once supplied them, they lose by the very fact of ceasing to be a lower order, and becoming a democracy (ibid.: 17-18).

The task of modern politics was not to stop this move, Arnold argued, but to put it into the right direction: to employ the ideals of an uncorrupted and thriving aristocracy which could no longer be found in the English society in order to shape and elevate the thought-mode of the middle classes. The source material for such an attempt was located by him in the writings of Homer and the means for making this material accessible to modern consciousness was deemed to be translation: a translation that would preserve and reproduce the grand and noble style of the original (1860-1[1]; 1906: 237-238).

Arnold began his lecture on "Democracy" by a reference to Homer. He argued that the "grand style" of the Homeric poems is an exemplary expression of a high-minded and rigorous aristocracy, whose administrative and political power can exert a beneficial influence upon the people. The Homeric style, he pointed out, illustrates "that elevation of character, that noble way of thinking and behaving" which is often "generated in whole classes of men ... by the possession of power, by the importance and responsibility of high station, by habitual dealing with great things, by being placed above the necessity of constantly struggling for little things" (1861[1]; 1962: 5-6). These were precisely the features that tended to vanish, in Arnold's view, by democratisation. As he put it:

> Our society is probably destined to become more democratic. Who will give a high tone to the nation then? (ibid.: 18)

The English aristocratic elite was deemed to be unfit for this role: "It is becoming impossible for the Aristocracy of England to conduct and wield the English nation any longer", Arnold asserted (1861[1]; 1962: 6). But neither could such difficult a task be undertaken by the uneducated majority. Hence Arnold turned to the state and the capacity of official education to advance a civilized spirit "which the stock of knowledge and judgement in [the] middle classes is not of itself at present able to supply" (ibid.: 22). A central instrument for such an attempt was the literature and culture of ancient Greece.

Arnold's theory of Homeric translation, which was developed in the same period with his essay "Democracy", set up the principles by which ancient Greek culture could be employed for this purpose. The predominant idea behind Arnold's argument was that Homer should not be seen as part of an ancient civilisation, but as an everlasting and unalterable

cultural creation. As he pointed out at the outset of his lectures "On Translating Homer", the contemporary study of Homer should not regard the epics "as part of a classical course, but as the most important poetical monument existing", an enduring achievement of high culture (1860-1[1]; 1906: 210). Homer did not produce an historical but a timeless work, he suggested, a literature which pertains no less to the modern than to the ancient Greek world. For this reason, any attempt to translate the epics for a contemporary audience could avoid, in his view, wondering in vain what Homer meant to the Greeks. It should rather be based on the modern guardians of high culture, namely the scholars. "The Greeks are dead", Arnold affirmed, "the unlearned Englishman has not the data for judging" a translation, while the translator himself cannot "safely confide in his own single judgement of his own work". The only tribunal he can trust is the opinion of those "who both know Greek and can appreciate poetry" (ibid.: 212).

The choice of scholars as the only legitimate judge of Homeric translation appears as a direct attack on ideals of cultural equality and for this reason Arnold's translation theory has often been described as "antidemocratic". This thesis has been extensively argued by Venuti, on the grounds that Arnold's focus on a presumably "correct scholarly opinion" as the only source for a faithful translation of the epics evidences a view of translation as "a means to empower an academic elite" and "endow it with national cultural authority", while simultaneously seeking to impose "scholarly values on other cultural constituencies" (1995: 119-120, 132). For the same purpose, in Venuti's view, Arnold considers "nobility" as the main Homeric feature a translation ought to preserve, thus assimilating the Greek text to scholarly cultural conventions, while marginalizing and excluding popular culture (ibid.: 133). Against this elitism, Venuti argues, one can posit a more democratic theory of translation developed by Arnold's contemporary, Francis Newman; a scholar who favoured a populist approach to Homer[170] by using in his translation the style of the English ballad[171] and fostered liberal democratic ideals by choosing a foreignising and therefore self-distancing and potentially reflexive translating method[172] (ibid.: 119-124).

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[170] Arnold's and Newman's thought on the translation of Homer should not be understood as a personal debate. It was developed in the context of a widespread problematic on the issue, which touched upon a variety of philological, historical and philosophical aspects of the topic. On this issue see Gladstone (1858); Anonymous [Blackie John Stuart] 1861; Anonymous [Whewell William] 1862; Anonymous [Reynolds S. H.] 1862; Blackie 1866a; Butcher and Lang 1879[1]; 1929.

[171] By "ballad-poetry" Newman and Arnold meant the traditional folk English ballads, those collected by Bishop Thomas Percy in his *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry* (1765), and songs and ballads collected by Sir Walter Scott. On the Victorian re-appraisal of the folk ballad see Bold (1979); Bratton (1975); Friedman (1961); Fowler (1968).

[172] Newman's (1805-1897) translation of the *Iliad*, first published in 1856, employed the literary form of English folk ballads as well as an archaic and often eccentric vocabulary. The choice of ballad-form was part of a broader historical turn in the study of Homer at the time, which was more inspired by a Romantic reappraisal of the folk

While certainly elitist, Arnold's approach to Homer cannot be described as antidemocratic. It expresses a semantic and political change, a turn in liberal conceptions of both democracy and ancient Greece, but not an attack on democratic ideals. Nineteenth-century liberal writers, as has been argued, were never hostile to the idea of social and cultural inequality, so long as these were the product of 'free' and 'unrestricted' competition rather than fixed conventions and hierarchies. The key element of liberal democracy, as it emerges from Grote's, Crawley's and Mill's rewritings, was individual freedom, rather than social equality. Arnold followed, but also transformed this conception. He began from the same abstract ideal of individuality that was employed by liberals and utilitarians during the first part of the century, but sought to redefine it as part of a model that promoted social unity and coherence instead of a supposedly self-regulating social competition.

The value of individuality was central in Arnold's approach to Homer. The main feature of Homer's nobility, he argued, derives precisely from the spirit of a gifted individual: it bears "the magic stamp of a master", the sign of an unrivalled talent which stands above the mediocrity of the majorities. The *Iliad* is nothing less than such a "masterwork", the outcome of a supreme mind that has guaranteed the epic's uniqueness. It has "a great master's genuine stamp, and that stamp is *the grand style*". On the contrary, the ballad style, that was used in Homeric translations by Newman and others, pertains, in Arnold's view, to the spirit of the majority. For it is a style which may exhibit, at its best, the vigour of its employer, but also manages to conceal the weaknesses of the bulk of the people, at the inevitable cost of resigning all pretensions to the highest and grand manner of great authors (1860-1[1]; 1906: 237-238).

The expansion of democracy, Arnold suggested, intensified the social need for such civilized manner and style. Yet while in the ancient times these pertained to the thought-mode and habits of a particular social class, namely the aristocracy (above), they could now be found throughout the entire social body. Herein emerged the role of the scholars, of the men of culture: one of selection, naming and cultivation. The scholars, in Arnold's view, are responsible for examining the products of different groups and classes, judging their value and refining them, when necessary, in order to transform them into the genuine source of

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national traditions rather than a radical democratic agenda (On the issue see Foerster 1947 and 1962). Newman's use of antiquated and foreignising vocabulary expresses a form of self-criticism which is more directed towards an exaltation of a romanticised individuality, than the development of a social and political problematic. As Newman himself stated, his choice was informed by an attempt to deviate from contemporary literary standards, which were mechanically inclined to exalt the apparatus of prose-composition, in order to advance a standard that was "far more *absolute*" and derived from the old canonical writings and dialects of the English national tradition (1856: xvii). For a contemporary discussion of the language of Homer, which considers the Homeric idiom an

social education. This move, he pointed out, is not adverse to democracy. Quite contrary; "the men of culture are true apostles of equality":

> The great men of culture are those who have had a passion for diffusing, for making prevail, for carrying from one end of society to the other, the best knowledge the best ideas of their time; who have laboured to divest knowledge of all that was harsh, uncouth, difficult, abstract, professional, exclusive; to humanise it, to make it efficient outside the clique of the cultivated and learned, yet still remaining the *best* knowledge and thought of their time, and a true source therefore of sweetness and light (1869[1]; 1975[2], 1993: 70).

Such an attempt could be nothing less than a "social mission", as Chris Baldick has put it,[173] whose aims would not be "satisfied" till "all [men] come to a perfect man", till "the whole of society is in the fullest measure permeated by thought, sensible to beauty, intelligent and alive" (ibid: 69).

The most important aspect of Arnold's argument is not the claim that an intellectual elite would canonise and impose the ideals of culture on the rest of the people, but the presentation of both this elite and its cultural products as socially and politically neutral. Unlike the Homeric times, Arnold stated, the spirit of culture is today universal and timeless. It is not related to a social class and does not articulate partisan values or interests. The scholars who are capable of judging Homeric rewritings must be devoid of class-affiliations. Their very authority is fundamentally based on their social neutrality. In contrast to existing candidates for power, that is, the Barbarians (aristocratic class), Philistines (middle class) and Populace (working class), each of which is entangled in petty interests and perspectivist views, the scholars, according to Arnold, could provide a state-education with the norms of a universal rationality and cultural perfection. They can create "a firmer and sounder basis for future practice" which can be materialised in an institution that stands essentially above and beyond social classes, namely the state. Such an institution, Arnold suggested, would then consist of those few members of the different classes, who are essentially "alien" to their social origin, in the sense that they are "persons who are mainly led not by their class consciousness and interest, but by a general *humane* spirit, by the love of human perfection" which bestows on them the "paramount authority of right reason" (ibid.: 109). Their knowledge can then act as the ground for social assent and the source of a much desired social unity, stability and coherence.[174]

"artificial" linguistic construct that draws on as much as transforms the Greek dialects and the folk tradition see Bowra 1968, Palmer 1962, and Shipp 1953[1]; 1972.

[173] For a further discussion of this issue see Baldick 1983: 18-85.

[174] The social neutrality of 'real' culture and its 'guardians' was explicitly praised by Arnold in his essay on "The Function of Criticism" in which he argued that "Criticism, real criticism ... obeys an instinct prompting it to try to

Homer in translation becomes thereby the symbol of a culture that has been dissociated from historical social needs, conflicts and interests; the articulation of a transcendent authority that can be recognised as true and valuable by the society as a whole. At the same time though, Homeric translation assumes a clearly social role, which comes to contradict its presumed neutrality. It becomes the means for advancing stability and unity in a society that is explicitly realised to be divided and threatened by conflict and antagonism. What is more, this unity is based on precisely those principles that would secure and reinforce existing social relations, thus consolidating the dominant position and power of the middle classes. Hence the key trait of the Homeric grandeur and the notion that must define translation before all others is claimed by Arnold to be "a Greek virtue [that is] by no means common among the moderns in general and the English in particular: *moderation*". This feature is considered important enough to be presented at the conclusion of Arnold's lecture on Homeric translation. "Homer", he advised the translator, "has not only the English vigour, he has the Greek grace", the grace exhibited in "moderation". The grandeur of the epics "is not the mixed and turbid grandeur of the great poets of the north ... it is a perfect, a lovely grandeur". There is no doubt that Homeric poetry "has all the energy and power of our ruder climates; but it has, besides, the pure lines of an Ionian horizon" that must be reproduced by the translator (1860-61[1]; 1906: 274-5).

Moderation, as it is defined in this context, is an essentially negative concept. Devoid of any relation to social life, it stands for a vaguely delineated cultural model, whose "perfection" derives from its dissociation from worldly conditions, its capacity to separate itself from actual human needs and relations, in order to redefine as "humane" an utterly dehumanised, abstracted cultural spirit. This purified, totally idealised culture provides simultaneously the grounds for a restrained and submissive social conduct, which restricts itself to a self-perpetuating intellectual enterprise that is far from being either radical or revolutionary. Instead it acknowledges as given and unquestionable the social conditions that surround it while advising moderation regarding one's approach to these conditions. Such a culture prohibits the imagining of social alternatives. Enclosed in the limits of theoretical speculation, it annihilates radical social questioning and is by definition antithetical to political action. As such, it promotes an ideal of complacent acceptance of the *status quo* and one's position within it, without enquiring into the social function, repercussions and potential alternatives to this position.

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know the best that is known and thought in the world, irrespectively of practice, politics and everything of the kind" (1887a: 38).

This ideal of culture as the basis of social stability and harmony was certainly distanced from the exaltations of free competition, social mobility and change of the previous period. Yet far from being a substantial alternative to liberal discourses, it developed as an integral part of and a necessary complement of the concept of democracy in modern bourgeois societies, which required as much the establishment of 'free' conditions for competition and exchange as the designation of rules by which this competition would be directed and canonised, so that it would not threaten the existing social organisation and structures. Such a danger was not, of course, perceived when the bourgeoisie sought to challenge a previously established social order and consolidate its power. Yet its emergence became clear when this power was felt to be unstable and precarious, endangered by the expansion and claims of a majority whose interests were adverse to those of both the bourgeoisie and the aristocracy, namely the "Populace", the working class. This group, whose basic "defect", according to Arnold, lay in its "bright powers of sympathy and ready powers of action" seemed "so fast growing and rising" that it was by then able to assert "an Englishman's heaven-born privilege of doing as he likes". Hence the Populace began "to perplex us", Arnold wrote, "by marching where it likes, meeting where it likes, bawling what it likes, breaking what it likes" (1869[1]; 1975[2]; 1993: 100, 105). The threat from this move, which was strategically designated as a threat of "anarchy", necessitated, in Arnold's view, an authoritative centre that would canonise the conduct of this majority and restrict its potential for action. This centre, which was identified with the power of the state, was not defined as a source of oppression. Its role, according to Arnold, was to bring about a "genuinely humane" spirit that pertains to people of all classes in the context of a class society, naturally structured by social and economic hierarchies.[175] As he put it,

> It is clear that the very absence of any powerful authority amongst us, and the prevalent doctrine of the duty and happiness of doing as one likes, and asserting our personal liberty, must tend to prevent the erection of any very strict standard of excellence, the belief in any very paramount authority of right reason (ibid.: 109)

This authority defined a standard of excellence which could remain unaffected by the conditions of human debasement and destitution within which it thrived. (One need only recall the extent of child-labour, a constantly evoked problem in nineteenth-century Britain, in order to justify this point). It sought to establish "a common basis of human nature", an ideal of "perfection" in the social body as a whole, in the context of these conditions and "under all ... class divisions" and oppositions (ibid.: 105).

[175] On this issue see Arnold 1869[1], 1975[2]; 1993: 105-106.

This model of social harmony informed a new appraisal of classical thought that accentuated the privileged role of a "cultivated", "perfected" middle class in the organisation and coherence of the Athenian society. As Arnold suggested,

> Ancient Athens has such profound interest for a rational man, that is the spectacle of the culture of a *people*. It is not an aristocracy, leavening with its own high spirit the multitude which it wields, but leaving it the unformed multitude still; it is not a democracy, acute and energetic, but tasteless, narrow-minded, and ignoble; it is the middle and lower classes in the highest development of their humanity that these classes have yet reached (1861[1]; 1962: 25).

The "culture of a people", which is so emphatically evoked by Arnold, is attained once the populace is excluded and marginalized: it is not a democracy, that is, the domination of the ignoble working class,[176] but a domination of a bourgeoisie that has developed at most its 'humane' nature and character, and in accordance with these sets up a high tone for all other classes.

In this context, the ideal of liberty, which informed liberal discourses on democracy during the earlier years, became qualified and complemented by a seemingly antithetical notion, namely 'order'. Culture was for Arnold an apolitical, merely intellectual advancement, but was also the main weapon against the threat of anarchy. Likewise, the classicist John Stuart Blackie described "civilisation" as the means for "the imposition of restraints upon liberty" and the establishment of "order" as the grand distinctive principle of civil society. For liberty in itself, that is, liberty that is not regulated by a higher authority, Blackie argued, would be catastrophic for both individuals and the entire social body:

> Liberty is a wild horse which can only be made serviceable to the commonwealth by being saddled and bridled by the great master, Order; it is a wine which, unless carefully used under the prescription of a wise physician, lifts a man for a moment into an imaginary heaven, only that it may plunge him into real hell (1867[1]; 1885: 10).

As was the case with Arnold's argument, this restriction of liberty was only ostensibly directed towards the whole of the people. Its main target, as Blackie's essay stresses, was that multitude which acts "only as a quantitative force without any regard to quality" and for this reason is not only unable to "perform the functions of self-government", but also threatens to force its will on the whole of the society by the mere force of numbers and the power bestowed on it by democratisation. As Blackie puts it, "the working classes in congregation assembled, merely because they can outvote the rest of the community by seven to three, have no immunity from the common frailties of human nature." What is more, it is their increasing power of numbers and capacity to enforce their views that necessitates both the restriction of

[176] Arnold uses the term democracy in his entire essay as equivalent to the term populace, as is also evident by the passage quoted here.

their freedom and their appropriate education in order to conform to and respect the rules of a rational order. Left to its natural tendencies this multitude cannot but resolve into confusion or rush into perdition (ibid.: 12, 18).

Two main aspects of Arnold's and Blackie's thought seem to have affected the translation of Pericles' description of classical democracy towards the end of the century: the conviction that the majority (which is no longer identified with the bourgeoisie) may or could possibly attain a ruling political position and the creed that such a prospect is neither desirable nor compatible with the ideals of civilisation and progress. Hence the translation of the passage in question by the Victorian scholar and professor at Oxford Benjamin Jowett (1817-1893) emphasised that democracy entails the handling of social issues by the many. He nevertheless sought to dissociate this form of government from the Athenian polity and suggested that the Athenian city was only 'called' a democracy. Yet, in reality, Athens was governed by an aristocratic élite chosen by merit:

> *It is true* that we are called a democracy, for the administration is in the hands of the many and not of the few. *But* while the law secures equal justice to all alike in their private disputes, *the claim of excellence is also recognised*; and when a citizen is in any way distinguished, he is preferred to the public service, not as a matter of privilege but as the reward of merit (1881:1.117-118 my italics).[177]

Jowett's understanding of the Thucydidean text is made explicit in the notes that follow his translation of the passage:

> though we bear the name of democracy, *this name is an inadequate description of the Athenian commonwealth.* For before the law all men (including the few) are equal, while at the same time *there is an aristocracy of merit* at the service of the state (1881: 2.106, my italics).

Unlike all other translations made since the seventeenth century,[178] which referred to democracy as a form of public administration performed with regard to or in the interest of the many, Jowett actually renders the source-text idea that democracy is a polity by which political power is "in the hands of the many and not of the few". Yet his work immediately disputes the institution of democracy in classical Athens ("it is true that we are called a democracy ... *but* ..."). For a democracy, for Jowett, lacks the means to recognise excellence and treats all people as equals, irrespective of their actual inequality in terms of capacities,

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[177] The source text is quoted in the second part of this chapter (section 2.2).

[178] Apart from the translations examined above, two further book-length translations of Thucydides were published during this period, written by Collier (1857) and Collins (1878). Collier selected only those passages of the source which refer to the "Plague of Athens" (i.e. the illness) and was intended to be a contribution to

worth and potentials.[179] Such a condition was, however, unknown to the classical city, Jowett suggests, which only established equality before the law, but simultaneously elected an "aristocracy of merit" that was put at the service of the state.

From this perspective, Jowett proceeds to translate Pericles' assertion that all citizens "participate" in politics by the idea that an Athenian citizen is fairly aware of political issues. As he writes,

> An Athenian citizen does not neglect the state because he takes care of his own household, and even those of us who are engaged in business have a *very fair idea of politics* ... and if *few are originators, we are all sound judges of a policy* (1881: 1.119 my italics).[180]

This translation not only changes the source-text's representation of the Athenian citizens as actively engaged in the political institution of the city; it further introduces a distinction between "originators" and "judges" of political matters, which is clearly absent from the source phrase "καὶ αὐτοὶ ἤτοι κρίνομέν γε ἢ ἐνθυμούμεθα ὀρθῶς τὰ πράγματα"; stating "we Athenians decide public questions for ourselves" (Smith 1956: 329).

These choices do not stem from the source text. They articulate the conviction of late nineteenth-century intellectuals that democracy must be dissociated from all claims to social equality and be reconciled with a society, whose unity is not threatened, but is rather nourished and sustain by distinctions and inequalities. Such a society, it was argued, avoids the dangers of a radical democracy which is dominated by the masses, and responds, instead to the demands of civilisation and the laws of nature. A society of equality, as Blackie stated, is only the dream of the "thorough democrat [who] is the sworn enemy of all eminence" and "hates to hear any man praised as in any way superior to the crowd". Yet by evoking such an ideal, Blackie maintained, the "thorough democrat" puts himself in "a state of open rebellion against the laws of nature and the institution of God" which have created people to be unequal:

> Everywhere in Nature, in every organic society, as well as in all societies, there is a high and a low, a controlling and a ministrant power, a dominant and a subordinate, a part formed to govern, and a part formed to obey (1867[1]; 1885: 11).

The basic criterion by which these authorities were claimed to be recognised had been clearly articulated by Arnold, Jowett, and Blackie himself: "culture" and personal

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"practical science" (1857: v). The passages in question were not included in this translation. I have not been able to view Collins' translation.

[179] The same assumption informed Jowett's reading and translation of Aristotle's *Politics*, which emphasised in the introduction to the text that the ancient philosopher "advises caution" regarding the idea of equality of mankind. He warns us against the confusion and perhaps destruction which an idea at present so impracticable and so incapable of being confined by law as equality among unequals may bring upon the world" (1885: 1. lxxxix).

[180] The source text is quoted in the first part of this chapter.

"excellence". Yet the moment these writers enquired into the roots of this "excellence", the evocation of "Nature" as the source of differences in worth and capacity was frankly complemented by the acknowledgement of the social basis of such divisions: the difference between people in respect of natural talents, Blackie argued, is immeasurable; "in respect to acquired worth even greater; and it is this acquired worth much more than native talent, which renders a man fit to take any share beneficially in the conduct of public business" (ibid.: 10). The crucial point in this statement is that the division between "originators" and "judges" of a policy, between a social group "formed to govern" and one "formed to obey" is at one and the same time attributed to nature and located in already existing social hierarchies, which allow only some parts of a social body to "acquire" education and culture.

Still it is not ultimately mere knowledge that sets up the criterion for these divisions. For "a direct knowledge qualification", Blackie argues, i.e. a qualification which can always be attained by the masses, "would result in a portentous system of artificial cramming which would be no genuine test of real knowledge". What is instead required in the process of granting political power is a safe criterion by which personal excellence can be recognised. This is identified by him with a property qualification:

> What we want is wisdom, clear-headness, discretion, moderation, coolness, independence, moral courage, experience of life, and position in society. Of these qualities a property qualification may afford a certain rough guarantee, a knowledge qualification may afford none (ibid.: 19).

Blackie's claim articulates the very logic that informed both Arnold's and Jowett's conceptions of society, in which an abstractly defined cultural eminence was evoked in order to displace the historical roots of social distinctions and the different potentials these implied for individuals. What is more, this claim puts forward the basic precept by which liberal democracy was conceptualised and institutionally enforced at the time: a political system which apparently offers the potential for choice to all, while simultaneously concealing out all choices for the majority of a social body.

It was only after this semantic transformation of 'democracy', which dissociated democratic politics from the ideal of social equality, that the concept was defined in purely positive terms at the beginning of the twentieth century. Hence in the years of the outbreak of the first world war, Alfred Zimmern was able to declare that

> Greek ideas and Greek inspiration can help us to-day ... in the work of deepening and extending the range and the meaning of Democracy and Citizenship, Liberty and Law, which would seem to be the chief political task before mankind (1911[1]; 1914: 5).

By this moment, the Athenian democracy was perceived as the embodiment of modern culture, civility and justice, whose 'Other' was projected onto the tyrannical and authoritarian oppression of national sovereignty. What was nevertheless silenced by this noble call to "mankind" is the highly problematic nature of the binary opposition between 'democracy' and 'authoritarianism' and the firm location of the 'other' within the 'self' of modern bourgeois societies.

CHAPTER 4

THE VANISHING SUBJECT OF DEMOCRATIC POLITICS: INSCRIPTIONS OF SUBJECTIVITY IN TRANSLATIONS OF PLATO'S *PROTAGORAS*

When John Stuart Mill translated Plato's dialogue *Protagoras* in 1834 he claimed to have had a twofold purpose. On the one hand he sought to respond to the "remarkable fact" that despite the "almost boundless reputation of [his] writings", Plato had not merely been scarcely understood, but scarcely even been read in Britain, not least due to the lack of good translations (1834[1]; 1978: 39, 42).[181] On the other hand he thought that of all of the Platonic Dialogues this particular one, with which he began his translation writings, was the most relevant to the spirit of his time, as it did not seek to assert a particular set of philosophical opinions, but to present an exemplary exercise in the art of investigating truth, that is, a mode of enquiry which is essentially dialogic rather than affirmative and involves the interrogation and sifting of opinions, thereby arriving at a form of understanding, which the delivery of doctrines from master to student absolutely precludes. This method, which pertained to the institutions of freedom and equality that were first established by the Athenian democracy, is marked, according to Mill, by the refusal to adopt fixed creeds concerning the truth, thus allowing for any result or belief to be the object of further investigation, of deeper and broader critical judgements (1834[1]; 1978: 42-44, 60-61).

This perspective shapes the translator's position towards the two main figures in the dialogue, i.e. Socrates and Protagoras, whose opinions on the nature of political virtue juxtapose in the translated text two antithetical thought-modes. The first, expressed by the Sophist, is a support of relativist thought, a determination of political virtue as primarily contingent rather than essential, in the sense that this virtue can only be defined by reference to historical human knowledges and evaluation rather than any immanent standards. For Protagoras – or more accurately for Protagoras in Mill's translation – truth can only be human, and justice, politics and ethics have man as their measure. The argument developed by Socrates is more complex and ambiguous, as it is primarily defined by the depreciation of 'human', temporal truths and seeks to identify the indelible traits of political knowledge,

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[181] Mill translated eight dialogues of Plato, four of which were published in the 1830s (*Protagoras, Phaedrus, Gorgias, Apology*). The *Protagoras* was the first of these translations to appear in print, published in the *Monthly Repository* (viii, February and March 1834). Mill's critique as regards the absence of translations was repeated by an anonymous article in the *Edinburgh Review* published in 1848 in which the reviewer maintains that given the "great genius of Plato", it is surprising to see that "so little justice has been done [to his works] by English translators" (1848: 322). Towards the end of the next decade, John Stuart Blackie endorsed Mill's critical claim: "Between Plato and the English nation", he observed, "there is in fact a gulf that cannot be passed" (1857: 6).

while at the same time relating this knowledge to the fulfilment of personal pleasure and interests, thus depriving it of its immanent status.

The Protagorean idea that human knowledges should be considered as the only legitimate measure of political virtue could justify, for Mill, not only the acquisition of freedom and the potential for political participation, but also the renunciation of unquestioned obedience to political authority lying outside worldly standards for critique and judgement. In order to sustain this point and refer to Protagoras as a predecessor of modern democracy,[182] Mill was first obliged to transform the image of Protagoras in his time, to argue against the widespread conception of the Sophistic movement as mischievous, debased and immoral, while demonstrating its unity with nineteenth-century social and political struggles on democratisation. His translation was thereby located within a broader debate which was continued and intensified in the following decades and sought to appraise the Sophists' thought-mode in comparison to the political and moral significance of Socratic ideas.

1. *Protagoras'* Absolutism: Democracy and Residual Political Traditions

One of the most important works in which this issue was formulated was Thomas Taylor's (and partly Floyer Sydenham's[183]) translation of Plato's dialogues published in 1804. This publication, which was the first complete translation of Plato into English (and the second into a European vernacular, an Italian translation being the first[184]) took shape under the spirit of a self-conscious idealism which accommodated Socratic philosophy as the realisation of spiritual perfection, while giving the Sophists no other intellectual space but that of the merchants and corrupters of knowledge, the mere spokesmen of popular judgement who are unworthy of the name of philosopher. For Taylor the translation of Plato's works could provide a much needed antidote, found in the Socratic doctrine, to this judgement, to the "two-fold ignorance" that marks "the disease of *the many*": ignorance with respect "to the sublimest knowledge" and ignorance of their condition of ignorance, which does not allow them even to "suspect their want of understanding" (1804: I. cxiii). Against this context, philosophy, Taylor writes, "is the purification and perfection of human life. It is the purification indeed, from material irrationality and the mortal body; but the perfection, in consequence of being the resumption of our proper felicity, and a reascent to divine likeness".

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[182] It is important to note that Mill's translation was among the first texts in which this idea was developed. There is a significant number of works which continued this problematic, among which is Cynthia Farrar's work *The Origins of Democratic Thinking* (1988).

[183] The dialogues that had initially been translated by Sydenham were according to Taylor "The First and Second Alcibiades, The Greater and Lesser Hippias, The Banquet [sic] (except the speech of Alcibiades), the Philebus, the Meno, the Io, and the Rivals [sic]" (Taylor 1804: I. cvi).

[184] Cf. Turner 1981: 371.

This philosophy, it is argued, which is "august, magnificent, and divine" "first shone forth with occult and venerable splendor" in Plato's writings and may truly be seen as "the greatest good in which man can participate: for it purifies us from the defilements of the passions and assimilates us to Divinity, it confers on us the proper felicity of our nature" (1804: 1. iii).

Unsurprisingly, Taylor expressed nothing but contempt for the sophistic thought-mode which articulated for him a "material irrationalism" that bore no relationship to real philosophical contemplation. Hence when he comes to translate *Protagoras* he reconstructs this image of the Sophist by employing a vocabulary that pertains to commercial transactions, to a world moved by interest and desire for profit, and by suggesting, subsequently, the artificiality and deceitfulness of this vocabulary. This image was sustained in certain cases by the Platonic text itself,[185] but in most passages was produced by its transformation. Thus, when Protagoras says in the original that he has arranged that a student should pay him only if he chooses to do so and explains that

> ἐπειδὰν γάρ τις παρ' ἐμοῦ μάθῃ, ἐὰν μὲν βούληται, ἀποδέδωκεν ὃ ἐγὼ πράττομαι ἀργύριον· (328b)

Taylor translated the passage as follows:

> Hence *this is the bargain which I usually make*, when any one has learnt from me, if he is willing, he pays me the sum of money which I require (1804: 5. 122 my italics)

The phrase "this is the bargain which I usually make" is introduced by the translator and cannot be read in the source text, which is only descriptive of the process of payment of the Sophist. Protagoras says only "if one learns from me, he would pay me the money I ask, if he wants to do so", but does not in any way refer to this arrangement as a bargain. Likewise, when Protagoras answers Socrates' question regarding what will happen to the young student Hippocrates if he associates with him, he says

> Ὦ νεανίσκε, ἔσται τοίνυν σοι, ἐὰν ἐμοὶ συνῇς, ἧ ἂν ἡμέρᾳ ἐμοὶ συγγένῃ, ἀπιέναι οἴκαδε βελτίονι γεγονότι, καὶ ἐν τῇ ὑστεραίᾳ ταὐτὰ ταῦτα· (318a)

The passage is translated as follows:

> O young man, *the advantage which you will derive* from associating with me is this, that on the day in which you come to me you will go home better than you was [sic] before (Taylor 1804: 5. 112 my italics)[186]

The phrase "the advantage which you will derive from ..." is absent from the original, but does not transform its denotative meaning, in the sense that, despite the fact that Protagoras does not explicitly says so, he certainly seeks to suggest that his teaching is beneficial and

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[185] Cf. *Protagoras* 313c-d; Taylor 1804: 5 108

[186] Compare with "Young man, if you associate with me, on the very first day you will return home a better man than you came" (Jowett 1892: 143)

advantageous for his students. Yet the addition of this phrase in the translated text presents Protagoras speaking at a register which is again suggestive of merchandise, of a calculative mode of thought that focuses on profits and losses, and thereby judges as right and true the advantageous and the useful. It follows that words which sound as if they were articulated as a merchant's discourse would share more traits with the logic and practice of commerce than with the modes of philosophical enquiry [187]

That this is a logic that not only fails to advance knowledge, but is also intended to deceive and conceal truth is asserted by the translation at the point the Sophist, in the source text, describes his work and claims to teach men the art of politics; that is to say, to teach them how best to lead their private lives and how to speak and act in the most successful way in the context of the city-state:

> τὸ δὲ μάθημά ἐστιν εὐβουλία περί τε τῶν οἰκείων, ὅπως ἂν ἄριστα τὴν αὑτοῦ οἰκίαν διοικοῖ, καὶ περὶ τῶν τῆς πόλεως, ὅπως τὰ τῆς πόλεως δυνατώτατος ἂν εἴη καὶ πράττειν καὶ λέγειν. Ἆρ', ἔφην ἐγώ, ἔπομαί σου τῷ λόγῳ; δοκεῖς γάρ μοι λέγειν τὴν πολιτικὴν τέχνην καὶ ὑπισχνεῖσθαι ποιεῖν ἄνδρας ἀγαθοὺς πολίτας. Αὐτὸ μὲν οὖν τοῦτό ἐστιν, ἔφη, ὦ Σώκρατες, τὸ ἐπάγγελμα, ὃ ἐπαγγέλλομαι. Ἢ καλόν, ἦν δ' ἐγώ, τέχνημα ἄρα κέκτησαι, εἴπερ κέκτησαι· οὐ γάρ τι ἄλλο πρός γε σὲ εἰρήσεται ἢ ἅπερ νοῶ (318e-319b).

The passage is translated as follows:

> The discipline too which he acquires from me is the ability of consulting well about his domestic affairs, so that he may govern his house in the best manner, and so *that he may be capable of saying and doing all that is advantageous for his country*. – I understand you, I replied, for you appear to me to speak of the *political art* and to profess to make men good citizens. – This said he, is the profession which I announce. – What a beautiful *artifice*, said I, you *profess*! If you do *profess* it. *For nothing else is to be said to you than that which I conceive*. (1804: 5. 113, my italics)[188]

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[187] To be sure Protagoras' doctrine did focus on how to live well in the city-state, on the capacity to lead a successful life as a citizen. Yet this did not imply the cancellation of an evaluative vocabulary, which was not taken to be fixed and stabilised, but was nevertheless determinable by the ethical and political codes of the particular cities (Cf. MacIntyre 1966[1], 1998:12-13). To describe this doctrine as identical with a utilitarian, commercialised morality is to forget that the concept for living well in ancient Greek (εὐδαιμονία) is a concept that was not used to refer to someone who makes 'profits' and gains material advantages (not least because these were to some extent given for the citizens). Despite the different conceptions of happiness by ancient Greek writers, a point of agreement among them is that such forms of welfare are only a preliminary and, in every respect, inadequate presupposition for doing the things that would make one happy, and certainly not the feature of a happy life.

[188] Compare with "I teach them what they come to learn, viz., how they may best manage their own families, and how best to speak and act in the affairs of the state." – "You teach politics then, and profess to make men good citizens." – "I do so." – "You possess an admirable art, if you do indeed possess it, which I know not how to disbelieve" (Mill 1834[1]; 1978: 48). In the translation of the last phrase of the passage οὐ γάρ τι ἄλλο πρός γε σὲ εἰρήσεται ἢ ἅπερ νοῶ it is Mill who changes the source text by translating it as "which I know not how to disbelief" and not Taylor

The translation changes the meaning of the source phrase "καὶ περὶ τῶν τῆς πόλεως, ὅπως τὰ τῆς πόλεως δυνατώτατος ἂν εἴη καὶ πράττειν καὶ λέγειν" (how to be the strongest (best) in speaking and acting in the context of the city) by introducing an idea which is not only foreign to the source passage, but also appears odd when it is thought of as a Protagorean claim: that his students may be capable of saying and doing all that is advantageous for their country.[189] If we suppose that this is not the result of a misreading of the syntax of the text,[190] it would appear that this rendering constitutes for Taylor a positive statement: instead of seeking personal success and recognition, as the source text says, Protagoras seems to be devoted to a presumably higher ideal, the good of the country. Yet it is only in the next phrase that this claim is disputed as pretentious and false by the choice to translate τέχνημα by 'artifice'; a noun which denotes on the one hand the product of craftsmanship, a handicraft, and on the other hand a device that is intended to deceive, a strategem that is inherently disingenuous.[191] The same effect is produced by the translation of the verb κέκτησαι (possess) by the verb 'profess'. For the former refers to an actual condition of things (one either has something or not) while the latter to a speech performance, a claim that can further be implied to be insincere.[192] Thus when Socrates in the source text says "you possess a beautiful art, if you do indeed possess it"[193] he articulates doubt and distrust over the truthfulness of the assertion that the Sophist can teach men to be virtuous citizens. What he questions however is not the Protagorean conception of political virtue, that is, the content of Protagoras' claim, but his ability to teach this art, and as we shall see, any man's ability to teach virtue.[194] In the development of the speech in the source text Protagoras may well prove that he possesses this teaching ability and that he can make men good citizens. In the translation such a possibility is precluded, since it is the entire thought of Protagoras that is portrayed as pretentious and

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[189] A basic premise of the Sophistic doctrine in general and of Protagoras' in particular is to explain, as MacIntyre points out, how to live well – that is effectively – in a city-state. While the ability to act for the benefit of the city and contribute to its advancement was a prerequisite of a good social life and was therefore not antithetical to this premise, it is unlikely that Protagoras would have posited it as an end in itself rather than a means for the constitution of a good life (Cf. MacIntyre 1966; 1998: 14)

[190] If Taylor's knowledge of Greek was not adequate, as a number of his reviewers seem to suggest, then he could have considered the noun τὰ τῆς πόλεως as the subject of the ἂν εἴη and the δυνατώτατος as predicate while ignoring that the latter is in nominative case. In my view, it would be difficult for someone who knows enough Greek to translate Plato to make such a mistake, not least because of the adjective δυνατώτατος which, being masculine, enables the reader to see that it is related to the subject as predicate. Still the Platonic text presents a syntactic structure which is often confusing for learners of ancient Greek, and thus a misreading is a possibility in this case.

[191] Cf. OED s.v. 'artifice'.

[192] Cf. OED s.v. 'profess'

[193] The word τέχνημα means both a skill, a workmanship and the results of this skill, the products of workmanship. W. K. C. Guthrie suggests the following translation of the passage: "Then it is a truly splendid accomplishment that you have mastered, said I, if indeed you have mastered it" (1956: 50)

[194] I shall come back to this point in the analysis of Mill's translation.

mystifying, the very content of his claims that constitutes a trickery, an artifice, a deceptive profession.

Taylor's translation was not welcomed by reviewers. *The Edinburgh Review* published a fervent critique of the work in which the reviewer (possibly James Mill) wrote that Taylor "has not translated Plato; he has travestied him ... He has not elucidated, but covered him in the most cruel and abominable manner". In particular the reviewer attacked Taylor's intellectual debt to "Proclus and the other philosophers of the Alexandrian school", his "stiff", "awkward" and "uncouth" language,[195] and his many grammatical, lexical and syntactical mistakes, the majority of which are attributed to the translator's lack of knowledge of ancient Greek (Anonymous 1809: 190, 191-2, 201).[196] Most of the examples of Taylor's "mistranslations" are taken from the translation of *Protagoras*, but are disappointingly restricted to pointing out grammatical, lexical and stylistic 'errors' of mainly philological interest, having as their only purpose to show "Mr Taylor's lamentable deficiency in every requisite for the performance of his arduous task", as it is claimed by the reviewer (1809: 211). The most revealing part of the review is an attack on Taylor's "Neoplatonist idealism", a critique, which is developed over several pages and indicates, according to Kathleen Raine and George Mills Harper, that the real motives of this attack can be found in Taylor's theoretical distance from the Scottish school of philosophy (1969: 23). This distance, as will be discussed, emerged with further specificity in the re-translation of *Protagoras* by John Stuart Mill and the writings of George Grote on Plato published in the middle of the century.[197]

In spite of this reception, the image of the sophist as a merchant of knowledge, presented in Taylor's translation, became significantly popular among British intellectuals of the time. Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834) wrote that a sophist should be considered as

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[195] Taylor's language has been often criticised in similar terms. As his editors Raine and Harper have observed "if Taylor had written better English his translations might have been more widely read." Yeats called his style atrocious while Coleridge wrote that Taylor translated from "difficult Greek into incomprehensible English" (Raine and Harper 1969: 18).

[196] The same accusations are repeated in another review (also attributed to James Mill) published in the *Literary Journal* in 1804 and an article on Plato published in *The Edinburgh Review* in the middle of the century. In the latter work the writer deplored the absence of any full translation of Plato's work into English apart from that published by "the notorious Taylor; in which, while incorporating the labours of previous translations, he has managed to mar them by his professed emendations, and to give the remainder in a form in which no reader of Plato could by possibility recognise the mutilated original" (Anonymous 1848: 325-326). Another review published in *The Blackwood's Magazine* (Edinburgh) was equally dismissive. As the reviewer wrote [Taylor is] "an ass, in the first place, secondly he knows nothing of the religion of which he is so great a fool as to profess himself a votary. And thirdly he knows less than nothing of the language about which he is continually writing." (Anonymous 1825: 737).

[197] John Stuart Mill was also dismissive of Taylor's translation. As he wrote in the introduction to his own translation of *Protagoras* "the only complete translation [of Plato] which exists in our own language is full of faults, and often with difficulty understood even by those who can read the original" (1834[1]; 1978: 42).

nothing more than "a market man, in moral and intellectual knowledges", "a wholesale and retail *dealer* in wisdom – a *wisdom-monger*, in the same sense as we say, an iron-monger" (1809-10, 1812[1]; 1969: 1. 436). This commercialisation of knowledge, he was quick to suggest, is detrimental, as it implies the perversion of truth and the submission to the deceitful power of perception:

> The understanding was to be corrupted by the perversion of the reason, and the feelings through the medium of the understanding. For this purpose all the fixed principles, whether grounded on reason, religion, law, or antiquity, were to be undermined, and then, as now, chiefly by the sophistry of submitting all positions alike, however heterogeneous, to the criterion of the mere understanding, disguising or concealing the fact, that the rules which alone they applied, were abstracted from the objects of the senses, and applicable exclusively to things of quantity and relation (ibid.: 1. 439).[198]

Treating knowledge and truth as an object for sale, Coleridge holds, not only corrupts reason by undermining all the fixed principles which sustain it; it further employs a mode of understanding that pertains to the process of counting and relating the objects of the senses, namely the truth of appearances. It thereby reduces knowledge to the precarious perception of the human gaze. The consequences of this process are not only catastrophic for science and philosophy, but also, Thomas Arnold suggests in his edition of Thucydides *History*, for the constitution of morality. While Arnold reserved a moderate praise for the "Greek Sophists" for "strong critical and inquiring spirit" of the Sophists, he immediately completed this statement by describing the Sophistic move as the greatest expression of immorality and wickedness:

> Not the wildest extravagance of atheistic wickedness in modern times can go further than the sophists of Greece went before them; whatever audacity can dare and subtilty contrive to make the words 'good' and 'evil' change their meaning, has been already tried in the days of Plato, and by his eloquence, and wisdom, and faith unshaken, has been put to shame (1835: 3. xxi).

The Sophists did not only damage knowledge; they blurred a far more important distinction, Arnold claims, that between 'good' and 'evil'. What they endangered first and foremost was the 'morals' which sustain appropriate social conduct, rather than the intellectual endeavour of the attainment of truth.

2. *Protagoras*' Liberalism: Democracy and Subjectivation

In this context, John Stuart Mill's translation became one of the first texts that sought to constitute a positive image of the sophistic movement, and Protagoras in particular. As the

translator emphasised in the introduction to this work, the ancient notion of 'sophist' had "misleadingly" become "significative of quibbling and deceit", even since the time of Plato himself. Thus the 'restitution' of its real meaning became one of the main purposes of his translation (1834[1]; 1978: 43). Mill suggested that the term 'Sophist' originally referred to "a teacher of wisdom" and explicitly endorsed Protagoras' political insight and contemporary relevance. As he argued,

> although Protagoras is confuted, and made to contradict himself again and again [in the dialogue] [...] what he utters is by no means either absurd or immoral, but, on the contrary, sound and useful good sense, forcibly expressed, or, at the lowest, an able pleading in favour of the side he espouses (1834[1]; 1978: 44).

Mill seems to be attracted to Protagoras' relativist conception of knowledge, morality and political virtue, while being hesitant before Socrates' arguments. His genuine hostility to a life submitted to blind obedience and intellectual apathy in the face of authority, and his commitment to the ideal of autonomous political thought and action are expressed in the meticulous translation of Protagoras' speech on the nature of "political virtue" (320d-328d) and simultaneous omission of significant parts of Socrates' objections to him. The Sophist's argument initially defends the idea that the main components of political virtue, i.e. "justice" (δικαιοσύνη) and "wisdom and moderation" (σωφροσύνη),[199] can be expected from all men reared in human society and constitute an indispensable presupposition of their collective existence and development. Based on the Athenian example, he states precisely this point:

> [οἵ τε ἄλλοι καὶ Ἀθηναῖοι] ὅταν δὲ εἰς συμβουλὴν πολιτικῆς ἀρετῆς ἴωσιν, ἣν δεῖ διὰ δικαιοσύνης πᾶσαν ἰέναι καὶ σωφροσύνης, εἰκότως ἅπαντος ἀνδρὸς ἀνέχονται, ὡς παντὶ προσηκον ταύτης γε μετέχειν τῆς ἀρετῆς, ἢ μὴ εἶναι πόλεις (323a).

Mill follows the passage relatively closely in his translation, changing only the notion of political into social virtue:

> The Athenians and others ... are ready, when the subject is *social virtue*, which depends wholly upon justice and prudence, to listen to *all* advisers, *because of this virtue all should be partakers, or states cannot exist* (1834[1]; 1978: 49, my italics).

I shall return to the significance of this change in the following pages. The idea expressed in Protagoras' argument that all citizens (i.e. people who are taught to be virtuous by growing in a social community) are partakers of 'δικαιοσύνη' and 'σωφροσύνη', and all are therefore

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[198] A similar image of the sophists is presented by Thomas Mitchell in his introduction to *The Comedies of Aristophanes* (1820: xlvi-lxxxi) and the 6th and 7th edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (s.v. 'Sophists').

[199] The term σωφροσύνη is very difficult to translate into English as it means a) soundness of mind and b) moderation while simultaneously indicating the intimate relation between the two: that a mind inclined towards moderation is sound and soundness necessitates moderation (Cf. Liddell-Scott *Greek-English Lexicon* s.v. σωφροσύνη).

worthy advisors when it comes to public issues obviously supported Mill's political creeds and principles. This idea, which recurs frequently in Protagoras' speech, is thus rendered by the translator, in opposition to parts of Socrates' thought, which are either condensed or entirely omitted.

In particular, Mill compresses a speech of considerable length (332a-334c) into a short sentence, in which he informs his readers that "Socrates forces Protagoras ... to admit that σωφροσύνη is the same thing with wisdom, that is the same thing with justice, or at least inseparable from it" (1834[1]; 1978:54), condenses a line of Socratic argument that is based on the distinction between 'being' and 'becoming' good (343c-347a), in which Socrates seeks to demonstrate on the one hand the divinity of goodness (being good) and on the other hand that man can 'become' good by getting to know what good is[200], and further omits a passage in which Socrates refers to this process of knowing as performed by each man alone and only subsequently communicated to others (348a-348e).[201] These passages constitute important steps in a complex Socratic argument which states, paradoxically, that while 'political virtue' is teachable, men cannot teach it. The resolution to this paradox is provided, as McIntyre suggests, by the Socratic thesis that knowledge of virtue is already present in man and has only to be brought to birth by a philosophical midwife, with the concomitant supposition that virtue is reducible to this knowledge (1966[1]; 1998: 21). That this was a position with which Mill did not quite agree – and hence chose to omit it in the translation – will be made clear if we analyse the development of Socrates' argument in the source text.

In the original *Protagoras* Socrates suggests an initial reduction of all components of virtue to knowledge and then seeks to demonstrate that if men get to know what is 'good' and what 'bad'/'evil', they would choose to do the former instead of the latter. To be virtuous in other words is considered to be identical to the knowledge of virtue, in the sense that if one has this knowledge it follows that one would act in accordance with virtue.[202] Yet as Socrates

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[200] The translation rewrites in a sentence the first part of the Socratic suggestion ("it is not difficult to *be* a good man – it is impossible, the gods alone are capable of actually realising the conception of goodness") while entirely omitting the second part as well as most of Socrates' points that sustain both. It thereby presents a line of argument which is confusing and incoherent (Mill 1834[1]; 1978: 55).

[201] There are further omissions in the translation which are not analysed here, since they are not relevant to my argument (as for example the omission of parts which describe the setting and the acts of interlocutors). A comparison of the two texts gives the following picture: 309a-310a omitted, to 312a summarised, to 314b translated, to 322d summarised, to 323c translated, to 330c omitted, to 332a translated with occasional omissions, to 334c summarised, to 338c omitted, 343c translated with omissions, to 346c translated with several omissions, to 347c omitted, to 348a summarised, to 348e omitted, to 349d summarised, to 351c translated, to 352a omitted, to 353a translated, to 353b omitted, to 354d translated, to 355a omitted, 356c translated with occasional omissions.

[202] For Socrates, as MacIntyre points out, this knowledge involves not only beliefs that such and such is the case but also a capacity for recognising relevant distinctions and an ability to act, to put principles into practical

makes clear both in the *Protagoras* and other dialogues, in asserting this point he does not refer to any kind of knowledge, but only to ἐπιστήμη, the knowledge of truth, in opposition to contingent conceptions of reality held in the different cities by the common people, i.e. δόξα. Hence it is argued that while δοξα can be taught – and it is precisely what the Sophists teach, Socrates implies in the *Protagoras* as well as in the *Theaetus* and the *Gorgias* – without nevertheless revealing anything about 'truth', ἐπιστήμη pertains to each man's capacity to approach a 'reality' that lies beyond this world and beyond the 'knowledges' produced in it; a capacity that is already present in man and has to be brought into being through philosophical contemplation. 'Επιστήμη is the knowledge of virtue in its immanent form, and this is the only kind of knowledge that effaces the distinction between wisdom and justice, pertains to divine 'being' and to personal human 'becoming'.[203]

Mill's thought could not accommodate such a strict opposition between ἐπιστήμη and δόξα. Thus, while he was far from being hostile to the privileged position knowledge occupied in Socrates' argument, he was keen to reject a definition of this knowledge in terms of transcendence, as a system of absolute truths, which are not produced by man, but are revealed to him in their immanent existence. To this idea Mill juxtaposed Protagoras' glorification of human capacity to reach and teach knowledge, the belief that "πάντες διδάσκαλοί εἰσιν ἀρετῆς" (327e): "it is thus with virtue: all men can teach it" (1834[1];1978: 51). This crucial assertion did not only confirm that knowledge is teachable – a belief that Socrates and the Sophist shared – but also that there exist teachers of it; an argument by which Mill intended more to dissociate knowledge from an absolutist logic, than to suggest that all men are indeed *equally* capable teachers.

Mill's reappraisal of the Sophists was followed by Grote, who suggested in his *History of Greece* that the term 'Sophist' had been misinterpreted by his contemporaries, as it originally denoted "a wise man – a clever man – one who stood prominently before the public as distinguished for intellect or talent of some kind" and was the natural product of a democratic society. Furthermore, Grote argued for the inextricable connection between Socrates and the Sophists in the context of democratic Athens, holding that any Athenian would not hesitate to classify Socrates among the Sophists of his time (1846-1856[1]; 1888: 7: 32; 4: 484-485).[204] This idea developed into a surprising identification of the Socratic and the

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application. It is both ἐπιστήμη (knowledge as intellectual activity) and τέχνη (practical capacity) (1966[1]; 1998: 21).

[203] Cf. the passages that were omitted in Mill's translation.

[204] This polemical assertion was felt to be controversial, especially by writers who did not share Grote's political convictions. Blackie's essay on "Plato" criticised Grote's work as "completely marred for historical purposes by the violent polemical attitude which this writer constantly assumes". "His pages" on Plato and the Sophists,

Sophistic doctrines in the work *Plato, and the Other Companions of Socrates* (1865), in which Grote presents an image of Socrates that is far more radical than that constituted by Mill's translation. Following his practice to include in his writings significant extracts of ancient Greek texts in translation, which was first adopted in his *History of Greece*, this image is constructed by a full translation of *Protagoras*, which is included in Grote's chapter on *Protagoras* and is followed by a short analysis.[205]

In this work Grote seems to be in full agreement with the Protagorean idea that all people are competent at teaching virtue and translates the original phrase which states this point as "all of us are teachers of virtue" (1865: 2. 44). Nevertheless he does not quite see Socrates' thought as opposed to this claim. On the contrary, Grote suggests that the arguments of *Protagoras* must be treated as a unity, whose overall aim was to establish the method of rational investigation, that is, the dialogue, and the value of cross-interrogation among equal interlocutors, all of whom are equally ignorant (ibid.: 71) Fascinated by the Protagorean conception of "man as measure" Grote sought to read in *Crito* the same idea as the basis of Socrates' philosophical thought,[206] suggesting that for Socrates reason and understanding were dependent on the perspective from which individuals approached truth.[207] For Grote perhaps more than Mill, the relativism that characterises *Protagoras* was the fundamental presupposition of democratic politics, as it established the "equal right of private judgement to each man for himself" while precluding the suppression of some opinions for the benefit of others (ibid.: 362). As he argued in a passage that presents a remarkable similarity to Kant's definition of the Enlightenment, "whoever denies the Protagorean autonomy of the individual judgement, must propound as his counter-theory some heteronomy":

> If you pronounce a man unfit to be the measure of truth for himself, you constitute yourself the measure, in his place: either directly as a lawgiver – or by dominating censors according to your own judgement ... You cannot get out of the region of individual judgements, more

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Blackie argued, "sound often like reports of an emphatic party-speech delivered in Parliament, rather than the grave verdict of a historian" (1857: 7).

[205] Grote's chapter devotes 40 out of 60 pages in the translation of the Dialogue, a practice which is followed in the presentation of other Platonic Dialogues. No other writer of the period seems to provide so clear an example of that kind of writing named by Lefevere as rewriting. Grote's philosophical, historical and political discussions of classical Greece are consistently sustained by extensive translations which become part of his own narrative – and it is only because of the 'invisible' status of translation today that this aspect of his work has hardly been observed by contemporary scholarship.

[206] Most reviewers of this work – with the exception of John Stuart Mill – were critical of this attempt and described Grote's rewriting of Plato as a very poor justification of his utilitarian and democratic creeds. On the issue see the following reviews of the book: Bain (1865a, 1865b); Caird (1865); Cambell (1866), Whewell (1865); Lewes (1866); Mill, J. S. (1866).

[207] As he argues "here [in Crito] we have the Protagorean dogma, *Homo Mensura* ... proclaimed by Socrates himself. As things appear to me. So they are to me: as they appear to you, so they are to you. My reason and conscience is the measure to me: yours for you. It is for you to see whether yours agrees with mine (1865: 1. 305).

> or fewer in number: the King, the Pope, the Priest, the Judges or Censors, the author of some book, or the promulgator of such and such doctrine. The infallible measure which you undertake to provide must be found in some person or persons – if it can be found at all: in some person selected by yourself – that is, in the last result, *yourself* (1865: 2. 358-9).

While Kant completed his exaltation of autonomous judgement by the assertion that in the context of civil life one must argue at an intellectual level, but nevertheless obey the rules of the community as they are given by official authorities,[208] Mill's and Grote's endorsement of "private judgement" was complemented by its explicit violation, the consideration of the judgements of certain individuals (selected by merit) as more legitimate than those others.

This point, which was explicitly expressed by Mill in his theoretical works,[209] becomes evident in two fundamental choices in his translation of *Protagoras*: the rewriting of the concept of 'citizen' by the concept of the 'individual' – a choice which is intimately related to Grote's idealisation of '*private* judgement' – and the subsequent distinction between those individuals who produce and those who merely possess knowledge of the laws of the city; a division which is absent from the source text. Thus, in Plato's *Protagoras*, man is a measure of judgement as citizen, that is to say, he develops the capacity to appraise and define virtue only by having learned what is considered to be virtue in the context of the city-state. This is evidenced in the two examples of acquisition of virtue provided by Protagoras, the first evoking the bestowal of political virtue on people by Zeus only at the moment they form societies (322c) and the second arguing that children learn to be competent judges of political issues through their education in accordance with the city's laws, precisely as in an imaginary city, in which the ability to play the flute is considered essential for people's survival, everyone becomes a competent flute-player (326e-327e). Thus, for Protagoras it is only those men who have been brought up to be citizens who are able to cultivate political virtue. As he says in the dialogue, each of these men, even the most unjust, would appear both just and capable of determining justice, when compared to those who had no education, no courts, no laws, in short, no social context in which they could be educated and act as citizens:

> ὅστις σοι ἀδικώτατος φαίνεται ἄνθρωπος τῶν ἐν νόμοις καὶ ἀνθρώποις τεθραμμένων, δίκαιον αὐτὸν εἶναι καὶ δημιουργὸν τούτου τοῦ πράγματος, εἰ δέοι αὐτὸν κρίνεσθαι πρὸς ἀνθρώπους, οἷς μήτε παιδεία ἐστὶ μήτε δικαστήρια μήτε νόμοι μηδὲ ἀνάγκη μηδεμία διὰ παντὸς ἀναγκάζουσα ἀρετῆς ἐπιμελεῖσθαι, ἀλλ' εἶεν ἄγριοί τινες (327d).

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[208] As Kant wrote "in some affairs which affect the interests of the commonwealth, we require a certain mechanism whereby some members of the commonwealth must behave purely passively, so that they may, by an artificial common agreement, be employed by the government for public ends (or at least deterred from vitiating them). It is, of course, impermissible to argue in such cases, obedience is imperative (1784[1], 1991: 56).

[209] On this issue see chapter 3.

Mill translated this passage as follows:

> All *civilised men*, even the most unjust, if compared with men among whom there is no training, no tribunals, no laws, with the wild men [of whom poets tell us,] *would appear a perfect master in virtue* (1834[1]; 1978: 51, my italics).

The translation introduces two significant transformations of the source text. Mill uses the notion of "civilised men" in order to render the Protagorean description of men reared within laws and society (τῶν ἐν νόμοις καὶ ἀνθρώποις τεθραμμένων)[210] and he further substitutes the idea that each of these men is educated to be himself "just" as well as "creator" (δημιουργὸν) of justice for the assertion that a civilised man "would appear a perfect master in virtue". The use of the term "master (in)" in the translation evokes the idea of expertise on judging political issues, the image of a man of learning and capacity,[211] who does not however 'produce' the laws by which virtue is determined. To be a perfect master in virtue means to know what is considered as virtue in a certain social context, but not to participate, actively, in the establishment of this context, in the creation of rules for judgement.

Grote's translation betrays a similar logic:

> The very worst man brought up in your society and its public and private training would appear to you *a craftsman in these endowments*, if you compared him with men who had been brought up without education, without laws, without dikasteries (sic) [courts of justice] without any general social pressure bearing on them, to enforce virtue: such men as the savages (1865: 44, my italics)

This translation does not explicitly take justice as the topic of the 'discussion' but the "endowments" of virtuous men, as Grote writes. Furthermore Grote translates the phrase δίκαιον αὐτὸν εἶναι καὶ δημιουργὸν τούτου τοῦ πράγματος by the idea that even the worst man of the Athenian (your, that is Socrates') society would appear a "craftsman" in virtue. The notion of craftsmanship does convey the idea of 'making' or 'producing', but is nevertheless related to a rather vague conception of virtuous endowments, instead of 'justice' and the production of laws. The notion of 'civilised' men is not explicitly present in the translation but can easily be read in the opposition between the men brought up by training and the "savages" who lack education, institutions of justice and the social pressure which would enforce virtue on them. It goes almost without saying that the idea that public opinion "enforces" virtue on citizens is absent from the source text and Greek thought in general.

The omission of the idea of 'political creation' seems to accord with Mill's conviction that democratic government requires the agreement rather than the participation of

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[210] The source text's phrase "ἐν νόμοις καὶ ἀνθρώποις" literally reads as "in the context of laws and people". That the term 'people' refers to society rather than an aggregate of men is evident from the context of this phrase.
[211] Cf. OED s.v. master, mastery.

the governed in politics, his dedication to a participatory form of democracy, which requires the consensus of the governed, but ensures that an educated minority is responsible for people's "good government".[212] From this point of view Mill described Plato's elitism – as expressed in Socrates' thought – as an "exaggerated protest against the notion that any man is fit for any duty" to which there was "more or less tendency in all popular governments"; a protest which is seen by Mill as ultimately justifiable, since its results are beneficial for both the governed and the governing (1866[1];1978: 406). This thesis leads precisely to the distinction between subjects who are capable of producing the laws of a community and subjects who are aware of these laws but are not fit for contributing to their (collective) institution, that is, a distinction between originating and – to use a term suggested by Balibar – "subjected" subjectivities (1994). Likewise, Grote qualified his admiration of Protagoras, by pointing out how the opinion of the common people, which he represents in the dialogue, "neither defines, nor analyses, nor submits to debate" what virtue is. Protagoras, Grote argues contradicting his previous thoughts, "manifests no consciousness of the necessity of analysis: he accepts the ground already prepared for him", he takes virtue as "a known and familiar datum" and he is therefore himself subjected to the "King-Nomos" (1865: 72). From this perspective both Grote and Mill concede that "the enemy against whom Plato fought", as Mill put it, "was not Sophistry but the commonplace", the knowledge of the multitude (1866[1]; 1978: 403).

Certainly Mill and Grote suggested no other criterion for the establishment of this division in a democratic society apart from 'merit', they only endorsed the bestowal of political authority on people of actual ability, education and talent, on the additional condition that all men and women should be given an equal opportunity to demonstrate this merit.[213] Still this position, which appears to be sustained by the omission of the source phrase 'political creation', articulates a conception of democracy, which cannot be found in the source text. For while Protagoras' description of the Athenian polity emphasises the essential ability of all citizens to determine the meaning of justice, Mill conceives of this ability as the privilege of a limited number of people and reduces the virtue of the majority to the knowledge of laws and the subsequent potential of being just, the capacity of being subjected to the rules of justice.

This assertion establishes a hierarchical division of subjects, which comes to contradict Mill's and Grote's exaltation of private judgement, their conviction that no man

[212] For a further discussion of this issue see chapter 3.
[213] For a further discussion of this issue see chapter 3.

can assume the position of a lawgiver without simultaneously evoking an authority that can never be fully legitimised, since it has no other measure for affirming its truth apart from itself, that is, apart from a fundamentally arbitrary process of self-justification. But how can one glorify individual autonomy and a relativisation of justice – however moderate and conditional – and argue, at the same time, that only a minority of individuals are qualified to become producers of social laws, that a number of private judgements are somewhat wiser and more just than the judgement of others? Mill did not – and from his position could not perhaps – provide a satisfactory answer to this question. He did however seek to resolve this contradiction by suggesting in his translation the dissociation of 'virtue' from the political order of the city-state and its relocation in the context of civil society; in other words by proposing a definition of virtue as a personal achievement of individuals rather than a trait of 'citizens'. Let us follow the development of this point by comparing the source and target text. For the Athenians, as is suggested by Protagoras, the ideal of 'political creation' was constitutive of a conception of man as citizen, whose education derives precisely from his participation in the political processes of the community and who is able to express – as part of a social body – moral and political judgements as well as establish the criteria for the distinction between the 'just' and 'unjust', 'virtuous' and the 'amoral', the 'worthy' and, as Thucydides maintained, the 'debased and apolitical'. Yet for Mill it is not the citizen but the "civilised man", as he writes in his translation, who is the subject of virtue, and thereby the "civilised and civil" society is not only distinguished from the political, but becomes the collective sphere *par excellence* in which man's intellectual and moral potential can develop. It is precisely this idea that informs Mill's translation of "πολιτική ἀρετή" (political virtue) by "social virtue" in the passage quoted above: a substitution of the political for the social realm which did not merely imply a disjunction of these two orders of social life, but their direct opposition; the constitution of a civil social order as the field in which the subject can be realised by being dissociated from political responsibility, by denouncing the capacity to create the laws of its collective existence.

While this translation can be traced back to the Latin and Roman-Christian interpretations of Greek politics[214] it is only in the context of modern bourgeois societies that

[214] According to Arendt, the transformation of the Greek concept of the 'political' into the concept of the 'social' goes back to Seneca's translation of Aristotle's ζῶον πολιτικὸν by *animal socialis*, which then became the standard translation through Thomas Aquinas' *homo est naturaliter politicus, id est, socialis*. This unconscious substitution of the social for the political, Arendt argues, betrays the gradual loss of the Greek understanding of politics, which is still present in the Latin use of the term social (*societas* in Latin also originally had a political meaning as it indicated an alliance between people for a specific purpose) but disappears in the concept of a *societas generis humani* by which the term 'social' begins to acquire the meaning of a "fundamental human condition": that men cannot live without the company of their species. While neither Plato nor Aristotle ignored

the appropriation of the political by the civil realm and the subsequent recognition of the former as the responsibility of the state (or the representatives of the state) rather than the people is articulated as an attempt at human emancipation, a condition which presumably safeguards and promotes individual autonomy and freedom – that distinctively modern kind of freedom which Arendt would successfully name as "freedom from politics" (1963: 280). Yet, this freedom, as we read in Mill's translation, acquired its meaning through a silent deprivation of the subject; it was articulated at the very moment man lost an essential political autonomy, the moment he was considered unable to participate in a self-instituted society and was subjected to laws created by others. What the rendering of *Protagoras* indicates is therefore that it was the loss of political freedom, the emergence of individuality at the cost of citizenship, that brought into being civil virtue and autonomy, the 'social' space in which a presumably 'free', 'self-determined' subjectivity could be conceived of and realised.

Here again we encounter the same ideological motif we observed in Thucydides' translations: the move by which an ideal is supposedly reached and actualised passes through its partial cancellation: 'virtue' is achieved by the cancellation of 'political creation', the erasure of 'political virtue'; freedom by the negation of its political aspects; subjectivity by opposing itself to the subject as political being, by the antithesis between the subject and the citizen. What emerged from this motif was a form of political authority which was justified on the grounds that it no longer violated the sphere of subjectivity, it was not imposed on civil society, but contrariwise existed as its ultimate regulator and protector. That this form of authority, which defined the organisation of modern bourgeois societies, was by far removed from Protagoras' relativist claims becomes clear by the distance between the source text and nineteenth-century translations. These set up a final appraisal of the Sophists that stressed the intellectual and political division between ancient relativism and modern sensibility. Hence Mill's initial defence of Protagoras was completed by the claim that "on the whole they [the Sophists] left the science of mind and of virtue in an extremely unsatisfactory state", while Plato shows in *Protagoras* "that it was possible to go much beyond the point which they had attained in moral and political philosophy" (1834[1]; 1978). Likewise George Henry Lewes, in his *Biographical History of Philosophy*, endorsed Grote's and Mill's positive appraisal of the Sophists and Protagoras in particular (1855[1]; 1857: 1.87-103), but also stressed the danger of

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this condition, which man shares for them with animals, they did not think of it as the distinctive feature of humanity. For them man was different from animals not because of this natural association with other men (whose centre is the home, οἰκία) but because of another life, besides this one, which was βίος πολιτικός, a life as a citizen, whose centre was the πολις, the city (1958[1], 1998: 23-24).

their scepticism for the universal validity of laws. He thus maintained that for the Sophists "all law is but convention" and hence "the convention of each State is therefore just *for it*". But more than this, since for them "any such convention must necessarily be ordained by the strongest party, i.e. must be the will of the many" one can conclude that "justice is but the advantage of the strongest" (ibid.: 102). This was not, however, the meaning justice acquired in the context of Socrates' thought and of modern science and positivist philosophy, Lewes suggested, from the perspective of which the Sophistic scepticism seems to be only the beginning rather than the culmination of an enquiring mind. The Sophists, he argued,

> were the natural production of the opinions of the epoch. In them we see the first energetic protest against the possibility of metaphysical science. This protest, however, must not be confounded with the protest of Bacon – must not be mistaken for the germ of positive philosophy. It was the protest of baffled minds. The science of the day led to scepticism ... [But] the scepticism of the Sophists was a scepticism with which no great speculative intellect could be contended. Accordingly with Socrates Philosophy again re-asserted its empire (ibid.: 1.102-103).

Despite their justified reaction against a worldview defined by metaphysical philosophy, it was argued by both Mill and Lewes, the Sophists did not – could not at the time – provide the moral and political precepts which would not be taken as an *a priori*, but would nevertheless be stable enough to determine the rules for a shared social and political life.

But where could a liberal-democratic society find these precepts? If individuals not only lacked the capacity to create political laws, but also conceived of this lack in positive terms, as an ability to realise civil virtue, where could the authority of shared political rules be based? Given the erasure of both a public and a divine sphere of *episteme* and ethics, who or what could subsequently provide the locus of political justice and virtue, the source of political institution? Mill's theoretical answer to this question is already known to us: a number of distinguished, educated individuals who could prove themselves capable of contributing to 'political creation'. That this response is in fact fraught with contradictions becomes evident if we consider Mill's conception of virtue as 'civil', 'personal' achievement, which provides no criteria for the bestowal of political excellence, leaves no space for the emergence of personalised political authority, even if this is to be limited to a small number of individuals. If the ideal of man's subjectivity is reduced to the sphere of civil rights and duties, within which women and men act as personal agents – members of the family, jobholders, participants in personal relations and so on – how can one define the traits of excellence required for the constitution of political virtue, of the 'meritorious' individual who can constitute political laws?

In contrast with his theoretical writings[215] Mill's response to this issue in the translation is unambiguous: in the context of liberal democracy, the subject as an embodiment of political excellence is conspicuously absent; man as a 'creator' of politics, as a participant in society's self-institution vanishes. "All civilised men" Mill writes "would appear a perfect master in virtue" while reserving no place for the source-text's conception of man as a lawgiver. What emerges in this deletion of the political subjectivity is precisely what the translated text *literally* says: that a 'no-body', an absence of the subject stands at the roots of liberal-democratic politics, that despite its persistent emphasis on individuality, the Law of democracy is articulated as a subjectless law – that is to say it is realised as the legitimacy of a structure of relations, not as the bestowal of authority on a person or group that is inextricably related to a dominant political position. Democratic society, as Lefort has remarked, is thus "instituted as a society without a body, as a society which undermines the representation of an organic totality". For the locus of power is "an empty place, it cannot be occupied", and thus power and authority are somewhat de-substantialised, they cannot be represented as unified entities. People are only the mechanisms for the exercise of power, "the mere mortals who hold political authority", while no individual and no group can be cosubstantial with it (1988: 18, 17). But this de-materialised, impersonal power does not cease to rule, as Arendt reminds us, "for having lost its personality". As can become immediately evident from the most 'social' form of government, bureaucracy, the rule by nobody does not in any way imply the absence of rule, the disintegration of law. On the contrary, it may be indeed constituted as one of its cruellest and most tyrannical forms (1958[1]; 1988: 40). To say that authority became 'disembodied' and non-representable does not mean that it resided in society and thus lost its essential quality as authority, that it became social, collective will. It means that it emerged in forms which functioned beyond the consciousness of subjectivities, but which nevertheless appeared in the outcomes of these forces, that is to say, in discourse and, in our case, in translations.

3. Is There a Subject in a Liberal-Democratic Society?

In the context of nineteenth-century Britain, the idea of political authority emerges in two interrelated and yet apparently antithetical forms, both of which become evidenced in translations of *Protagoras*. The first of these forms is located no further than civil society itself: it lies in the very logic that governs this society's socio-economic relations, which is expressed in the principle of utility, the maxim that pleasure or happiness is the only

[215] For a further discussion of Mill's theoretical approach to this issue see chapter 3.

legitimate measure for the judgement of political virtue. For John Stuart Mill – as for the originators of utilitarianism, James Mill and Jeremy Bentham – utility, the quest for maximisation of individual pleasure and fulfilment of personal desire, gives meaning to an authority which is deemed to stand above originating political consciousness, a law to which both 'dominant' and 'dominated' groups must be subjected. The principle of the greatest happiness for the greatest number is for them the only justified criterion for evaluating political virtue and justice, and the fundamental Law that governs a democratic society. Conversely, the second form of authority, which becomes evident in Jowett's translation of *Protagoras* (written during the second half of the century), appeared as a direct opposition to utilitarian ideas and sought to reintroduce the notion of a supreme good as a unifying social force: a presumably universal moral code according to which civil duties and rights must be canonised in ways that they would foster social unity and coherence. While this suggestion employed an explicitly religious vocabulary and identified 'good' and 'virtue' with 'divine will', its historical formulation, as will be argued, did not develop as a mere resurrection of Christian ideals, but employed a secularised concept of the 'Law' as a reaction to and a resolution to the social conflicts and instability that defined the target society.

3.1 *Protagoras'* Utilitarianism: Democracy and the Market

In the debate between Socrates and Protagoras, the definition of the meaning of 'good' plays a central role in their inquiry into the nature of political virtue. In the course of their discussion Socrates makes Protagoras acknowledge the identity of all elements of virtue and their absolute dependence on σωφροσύνη, the capacity of a sound mind that is founded on moderation. Subsequently Socrates asks whether a pleasant life is to be identified with the 'good', and after a short discussion, in which he finds his interlocutor to be in agreement with him, Socrates draws the following conclusion:

> Τοῦτ' ἄρα ἡγεῖσθ' εἶναι κακόν, τὴν λύπην, καὶ ἀγαθὸν τὴν ἡδονήν, ἐπεὶ καὶ αὐτὸ τὸ χαίρειν τότε λέγετε κακὸν εἶναι, ὅταν μειζόνων ἡδονῶν ἀποστερῇ ἢ ὅσας αὐτὸ ἔχει, ἢ λύπας μείζους παρασκευάζῃ τῶν ἐν αὐτῷ ἡδονῶν (354c).

Mill translates the passage as follows:

> pleasure is the same thing with good, and pain with evil: and if a pleasure is bad, then it is because it prevents a greater pleasure, or causes a pain which exceeds the pleasure: if a pain is good, it is because it prevents a greater pain, or leads to a greater pleasure (1834[1]; 1978:58).

The translation stays close to the source text. Yet the idea expressed by Socrates at this point is part of a broader argument developed in the dialogue, which ultimately seeks to question the relativism implied in the identification of 'good' with 'pleasure' and 'evil' with 'pain',

and maintain, as we have already seen, that political qualities are intrinsically 'good', as expressions of an *a priori* truth, rather than judged as good by such temporal and contingent standards. It is only by omitting a substantial part of this argument, as mentioned above, that Mill is able to declare, when commenting on Socrates' thought at the end of his translation, that

> the principle of utility, – the doctrine that all things are good or evil, by virtue solely of the pleasure or the pain which they produce, – is as broadly stated, and as emphatically maintained against Protagoras by Socrates, as it ever was by Epicurus or Bentham (1834[1]; 1978: 61).

The doctrine of utilitarianism, which Mill reads in the Platonic text articulates a moral and political position that was inconceivable in the ancient Greek *polis*, while being most readily linked with the ideals that defined civil social relations and the capitalist market economy of nineteenth-century Britain. Utility is associated with individual pleasure and pain, and when it is used as the measure of general happiness it leads to the assumption that the accumulation of various subjective happiness would result in the maximisation of the common good. Yet despite frequent evocations of the well being of the community, utilitarianism, as Ross Poole has pointed out, feeds on the disjunction between personal motivation and social consequence, and thus finds itself unable to explain why individuals might be motivated by a concern for the general happiness when this happiness is not related to their own interests (1991: 17). In the context of ancient Greece, even the most fervent critics of the Athenian democracy could not conceptualise such a disjunction. The well being of the citizen, as Greek philosophers, artists and historians have depicted it, is directly connected to the common good, it is rooted in the good of the city. This did not imply that the city was a political entity whose 'will' was imposed on its members. The city consisted of its members in their collective existence, it created no distinction between the political and the social sphere, at least in the limited space defined by legitimate citizenship. The well being of the polis was therefore nothing more and nothing less than the well being of citizens. There was no conceivable distinction, let alone opposition, between the former and the latter. The city, Aristotle remarked in *Politics*, does not merely come into being for the sake of living, but for the sake of living well (iii v.10)

To equate this conception of happiness (εὐδαιμονία) with utilitarian definitions of pleasure, as were articulated in Bentham's and James Mill's writings, was not only an anachronism, but a complete appropriation of classical philosophy and history. It was nevertheless an appropriation that was in total accordance with a line of thought, which identified 'civilisation' with civil society and described the traits of a capitalist social order as

the results of historical progress and development. For the principle of utility emerged as the direct outcome of an intellectual tradition that saw the accumulation of profit, the propensity for self-interested social conduct, the right to private property, the glorification of competition, the maximisation of production, and the social division of labour as the necessary presuppositions of a civilised way of life, as the social features that distinguished 'us' from 'rude' and 'barbaric' nations, 'still' trapped in 'previous' forms of social and cultural organisation.[216] It is not difficult to see how this tradition defined a philosophical framework which was directly relatable to the logic and needs of the market economy and social structures of the period. In a sense the 'glory' of the market, as Poole has observed, is the extent to which it manages to minimise effort and maximise production. If therefore the satisfaction of wants *is* happiness and effort *is* pain, and the excess of happiness over pain can be defined as utility, then "utility seems to be just what the market provides and utilitarianism just what it needs" (1991: 8).

Yet, defined in this way, 'virtue' becomes radically different from the meaning of the term in the source text. If the appropriateness of social conduct is determined in terms of utility and private interests, and these interests are conceived of merely in terms of maximisation of profit, then it becomes impossible to develop a conduct that aims towards the well being of others. For 'others' become means for the realisation of my own ends, and if I consider them as something different than means, these ends will not be realised. If, say, I, as the owner of a company show consistent compassion towards the personal circumstances of my employees and run the company in accordance with them, choosing for example not to make a number of them redundant in order to minimise my costs, or if I consider the wider social implications of my products (for example the impact of the use of models in advertising on the formation of women's and men's self-perception) as more important than my own interest, I shall not be able to maximise my profit either. In other words it is only to the extent that individuals are ready to act with a certain impersonality and lack of altruism, if not ruthlessness, with respect to each other, and to the common good, as Poole remarks, "that the market as a whole will exhibit the beneficent tendencies which have been its glory" (1991: 7). But if it is the principle of utility that posits the Law of a sociopolitical order, as Mill's translation maintains, is it not ultimately 'profit' rather than 'virtue' which sets the measure for politics and morality? For it is profit, or as Bentham put it, it is money, which is the instrument for the measurement of 'pain' and 'pleasure', and thus the standard for the judgement of 'politics' and 'morality'. As Bentham wrote,

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[216] On the issue see the discussion on Kant's and Ferguson's writings in chapter 1, section 3.

> I speak and prompt mankind to speak a mercenary language. The thermometer is the instrument for measuring the heat of the weather, the barometer for measuring the pressure of the air. Those who are not satisfied with the accuracy of these instruments must find out others that shall be more accurate, or bid *adieu* to Natural Philosophy. Money is the instrument for measuring the quantity of pain and pleasure. Those who are not satisfied with the accuracy of this instrument must find out some other that shall be more accurate, or bid *adieu* to Politics and Morals (1973: 123).

The law of an economy becomes thereby a political and moral law, the maximisation of individual interests and pleasure, and the minimisation of pain becomes a rule which not only functions above and beyond subjects; it annihilates subjects altogether. It provides no space either for the emergence of 'excellent', 'virtuous' individuals or for the consideration of others as subjectivities.

From this point of view, does not Mill's equation of Socrates' position with utilitarian principles bring about a far more pervasive transformation of the Socratic doctrine, namely the effective dispersal of virtue? Does not the conception of 'good' as 'useful' further dispel the very criterion by which Socrates establishes such a distinction and thereby defines virtue, namely truth? For the truth by which the Socratic 'good' can be appraised is not merely antithetical, but totally irrelevant to the concept of utility. As many critics of utilitarianism have argued, the postulate of utility and even the principle of the greatest happiness of the greatest number do not provide any means for defining 'good', but can only be established in a society in which such a definition stems from a different ethical code. The concept of public happiness, as MacIntyre has pointed out,

> has obviously legitimate application in a society where the consensus is that the public happiness consists in more and better hospitals and schools, but what application has it in a society where the public happiness is found by the public itself to consist in the mass murder of Jews? (1966[1]; 1998: 238)

Mill could never of course have accepted the legitimacy of this latter choice, and this is why MacIntyre astutely describes him as a utilitarian who was painfully aware of the problems of his position, but could not conceive of abandoning it either (1966[1]; 1998: 235). His thought on virtue appears inherently ambiguous, intrinsically divided. Mill was as keen on defining moral standards, on limiting egotistic behaviour and establishing a collective happiness as he was eager to endorse the right of individuals to pursue their personal goals and interests. What he could not recognise – and this is the point at which his thought becomes ideological – was the essential antithesis between these propositions, the fact that the 'right' to pursue 'pleasure' in a society in which pleasure is equivalent with individual profit can only bring about an absence of morality and a lack of collective happiness.

To be sure, an intellect as sensitive towards human needs and perceptive of political issues as Mill's could not be left unaffected by the resonance of the creeds he consciously espoused. A doubt regarding his own thought, a latent dispute of his position emerges in the translation of *Protagoras* when he encounters a concept which he deems to be untranslatable: σωφροσύνη. The Greek word, he writes,[217] was in very popular use in the source context and conveyed to the mind of a Greek associations of the highest praise, a combination of moral and intellectual qualities. It is however "untranslatable into English, because we have no single word by which we are accustomed to express the same combination of qualities and of feelings". Mill cites several translations of the term: "prudence", "temperance", "decency", "decorousness", "considerateness", "good sense" without being able to deem any of them as appropriate (1834[1]; 1978: 53). His final choice of the word 'prudence', which appears in the translation of the passage analysed above (323a), is therefore reluctant, and in a few other cases Mill uses the Greek word in his translation.

But why does the choice of the term 'prudence' posit such a significant problem for Mill as a translator? Which were for him the 'qualities' denoted by the source concept that could not be rewritten in modern English? In his attempt to explain σωφροσύνη Mill suggests that it "denoted all the qualities or habits which were considered most contrary to licentiousness of morals and manners, in the largest sense of the term". This concept, he writes, developed in a social context which had not yet fully established laws for the protection of person and property (although these laws were more effective in Athens than other cities), and thus needed a moral ideal that would promote the habits of self-restrained and regulated life:

> In a state of society in which the control of law was as yet extremely weak, in which the restraints of opinion, even in the democratic states, acted with little force upon any but those who were ambitious of public honours, and in which everywhere (even at Athens where person and property were far more effectually protected than in the other states of Greece) the unbridled excesses of all sorts committed by the youth of the higher classes, endangered the personal security and comfort of every man, it is not wonderful that self-restraint, and the habits of a thoughtful and regulated life, should be held in peculiarly high esteem (1834[1]; 1978 33-34).

The interpretation of σωφρόσυνη given in this passage is quite reductive of the meaning of the source term, which also evoked the idea of good sense and wisdom, while being in fact much closer to the meaning of Mill's rejected translation, 'prudence'.[218] The latter term

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[217] A commentary of almost two pages on the word σωφροσύνη is written as part of the translated text itself rather than being introduced in the form of paratext.

[218] Grote translated the concept by the term 'moderation' (1865: 50).

denotes precisely the opposite of excessive, inconsiderate behaviour, the ability to choose a suitable course of action especially as regards conduct; it evokes the idea of practical wisdom and discretion in a social context. Yet besides this meaning, 'prudence' also refers to the ability to choose a profitable course of action,[219] it has been connected with 'thrift', as MacIntyre points out, and especially thrift in monetary matters. A 'prudent man' has "something of the flavour of being cautious and calculating in one's own interest", he possesses that peculiar kind of 'virtue' that is "embodied in life insurance" (1966[1]; 1998: 74). Bentham's writings articulate explicitly this connotation of the term. 'Prudence', as he argues, "consists in the sacrifice of the present to the future" insofar as this sacrifice can promise a maximisation of future pleasure or a minimisation of future pain. Yet "to give up any the least particle of pleasure for any other purpose", Bentham maintains, "is not virtue, but folly" (1973: 94-95).

The second meaning of the term, which evokes the notions of thrift and calculation, would not have been consciously endorsed by Mill and for this reason he described the source concept as untranslatable. 'Prudence' as the capacity for self-constrained social conduct is a fairly accurate translation of a term that is supposed to evoke the habits of regulated life. It is 'prudence' as thrift, as the capacity for calculation of interests, which is rejected as an equivalent of the source concept.

Mill's implicit self-criticism was not merely an instance of personal doubt. What his hesitance indicates is that the concepts of 'individuality' and 'virtue', that developed in the discourses of liberal democracy, acted to enunciate at once a critique and a reinforcement of their social context. In this sense, they were ideological insofar as they constituted an image of the subject, which was produced in order to manipulate and displace an existing emptiness, to conceal the impossibility of subjectivation in the context of modern bourgeois societies. Yet their emphasis on the priority of man in a framework which essentially annihilated subjectivity was already a move towards a self-critique and a break with this framework. For it is only on the basis of this priority, of the supposition of the value of man, that one can discern the actual absence of the subject and criticise the substitution of human beings for the value of utility and profit prescribed by the laws of the market. It is far from being coincidental that it was the same idea of man as a sovereign being that was employed by Marx in his early writings in order to articulate one of the most fervent critiques of bourgeois democracies for the alienation of subjectivity and the absence of human conditions:

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[219] Cf. OED s.v. 'prudence'.

> Political democracy ... regards man – not merely one man but every man – as a *sovereign* and supreme being, but man in his uncultivated, unsocial aspect, man in his contingent existence, man just as he is, man as has been corrupted, lost to himself, sold and exposed to the rule of inhuman conditions and elements, by the entire organisation of our society – in a word man who is not yet a *true* species-being (1843[1]; 1975: 225-6).

This thesis does not only take the 'individual' as an ideological object against which it posits itself. On the contrary, it finds in the mystifying character, in the ideological appearance of this object, a truth that constitutes its most fundamental presupposition, the means for the critique of the subject *qua* 'individual' in order to constitute it anew *qua* social and genuinely sovereign subject.

3.2 *Protagoras'* Authoritarianism: Democracy and Subjection

Based on this idealisation of interest, the liberal glorification of individuality was inherently inclined to lead to an authoritarian political viewpoint, when it came to the resolution of conflicting interests within a social community. Having sustained a social world based on inequalities and asymmetrical power relations, liberal-democratic institutions had to reconcile the oppositional claims of diversified and hierarchically stratified groups, each of which sought either the transformation or the perpetuation of existing social divisions. Without recourse to an ethics of political responsibility, which can only characterise a social community based on equality and political integration of its citizens, such reconciliation was established by the reconstitution of an absolutist vocabulary, which aimed to naturalise hierarchical social structures and legitimise the authority of dominant groups as indispensable to the maintenance of social coherence and reproduction. Thus a belief in the "naturalness" of human inequality was furthered after the middle of the nineteenth century and was fervently endorsed in Jowett's significant publication of translations of Plato in 1871.[220]

Jowett's work was explicitly directed against Mill's and Grote's readings of the ancient philosopher. It sought "to represent Plato as the father of Idealism, who is not to be measured by the standard of utilitarianism or any other modern philosophical system", but could provide an alternative to individualistic ethics and lack of authority, which was deemed to be a menace to social order and coherence (1892:I.xi). From this perspective, Jowett's translation of *Protagoras* established a strong division between the two main interlocutors of the dialogue. It represented Protagoras as the advocate of a common and contingent

[220] Jowett's first translation of the *Dialogues* appeared in 1871. A further edition, in which the writer revised both the translation, the introduction and the commentaries was published in 1875. A third edition, which was again revised, was published in 1892. Each of these editions is listed separately in the bibliography under the name of the translator.

knowledge, the "average public opinion", and Socrates as the seeker of increased clearness, eternal truths, and unity of ideas (1892: 1.122). Jowett expressed his clear preference for the latter: "The truth of Protagoras", he argued,

> is based on common sense and common maxims of morality, while that of Socrates is paradoxical or transcendental, and though full of meaning and insight, hardly intelligible to the rest of mankind (1892: 1.122).

The argument of Socrates, it is suggested, delineates a moral code that surpasses commonsensical, trivialised truths; it illustrates a process through which "we pass from old conventional morality to a higher conception of virtue and knowledge" (1892: 1. 126).[221]

In opposition to Mill's translation, which calls into question the idea of a universal unity of the 'Good' by omitting or summarising a few passages of the original, the higher truth which Jowett evokes indicates the unifying source of this morality – a postulate which is taken to posit the main purpose and meaning of the Platonic dialogue: "The aim of Socrates, and the Dialogue, is to show the unity of virtue. In the determination of this question the identity of virtue and knowledge is found to be involved" (1892: 1.123). Consequently, Jowett's translation follows meticulously all of the passages of the original that were left out by Mill and could lead to such conclusion. This choice does not, however, lead to the close adherence of the translation to the source text. For despite the reproduction of the Socratic arguments, Jowett invited his audience to read *Protagoras* from the perspective of Christian beliefs and saw in Plato's ideas a predecessor and surrogate of a religious ethical code. Thus the Platonic 'good', which stands at the origin of human virtue, was identified by Jowett with divine transcendence. As he argued,

> The Good must represent a unity, in which all time and all existence were gathered up. It was the truth of all things, and also *the light in which they shone forth and became evident to intelligence, human and divine*. It was the cause of all things, the power by which they were brought into being. *It was the universal reason divested of human personality*. It was the life as well as the light of the world, all knowledge and all power were comprehended by it ... To ask whether God was the maker of it, or made by it, *would be like asking whether God could be conceived apart from goodness, or goodness apart from God* (1892: 3 xcvii-xcviii, my italics).[222]

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[221] A similar position was advanced by Blackie, who argued that "Socrates and Plato ... were not teachers who taught the art of influencing democratic assemblies by spoken words for hire, they taught a much loftier and more difficult art, the art of self-culture, as the ultimate and only sufficient end for a rational being to pursue". On the other hand "the Sophists must often have been exactly what they are represented to be in Plato's dialogues, teachers of a very superficial wisdom and of a very worldly morality" (1857: 19).

[222] The relation between Plato and Christianity was accentuated by a significant number of Platonists since the late fifties. As Blackie stated in 1858 "[it does not] require a very profound glance to see how Platonic philosophy and Christian faith, in their grand outlines, characteristic tendencies, and indwelling spirit, are identical" (1857: 9)

Unlike both Grote and Mill, Jowett did not understand *Protagoras* as an exaltation of a dialogic enquiry into truth, in the context of which the 'right' and the 'good' can never be determined in advance, but are established by the rational investigation of equal interlocutors. A code of knowledge and moral propriety is given, in his view, by the authority of divine knowledge and transcendent morality. For it is only through the light offered by Christian thought, he argues, that the human mind can dissociate itself from its mortal bonds and attain the transcendent, universal truth that was invested by God in man. For this reason, Jowett consciously chose to employ in his translation the language and rhetoric of the Authorised Version of the Bible, "which allowed [the translated texts] to strike a responsive chord among the religiously minded", as Turner has pointed out (1981: 415), and indicated the intimate relation of the Truth which Plato sought through reason to the truth revealed to Christian believers by the Gospel.[223]

Yet this choice did not entail the transformation of *Protagoras* into a religious text. Conversely, this stylistic appropriation of Platonic philosophy acted at the time to sustain Christian faith by suggesting that the truth attained by the ancient Greeks through the power of rational enquiry was in fact identical with the truth of religion. Instead of merely christianising and domesticating Plato, Jowett's work, as Turner has argued, transformed a liberal Christianity into a moral stance which sought to legitimise itself by an appeal to the wisdom of Plato (ibid.: 415). From this perspective, Jowett's translation seems to accord with the larger body of writings which appear to be deeply enmeshed in the paradoxical effort to advance a non-dogmatic defence of Christian dogma. In his purely theological texts, Jowett is no less critical a reader of the Bible than a great majority of liberal sceptics of his time. His essay "On the Interpretation of the Scripture" recognised that "modes of interpreting" the Biblical text "vary as time goes on" and "partake of the general state of literature or knowledge" of an epoch (1861: 331). What this condition implies is that "the present circumstances which surround us pre-occupy our thoughts" in any effort to read the Scripture. It follows then "quite naturally, almost by a law of the human mind" that "the application of Scripture takes the place of its original meaning". Yet "the question is not how to get rid of this natural tendency, but how we may have the true use of it" (ibid.: 412). Jowett's aim is to understand religious truths from a contemporary point of view in order accept them as a

[223] A number of reviewers were critical of Jowett's appropriation of Plato's texts, although all of them generally characterised his translations as a major contribution to nineteenth-century English literature. As Abbott and Campbell asserted at the end of the nineteenth century, after Jowett's translation "everyone acknowledged that Plato was now an English book" (1897: 1(2). 7) Reviews of Jowett's translation of Plato include the review of his student and Aristotelian scholar Alexander Grant (1871); the review of David Binning Munro (1871), and an anonymous review published in 1871 in the *Macmillan's Magazine*.

dogma, rather than seeking their eternal truth by means of revelation – and it is for this purpose that he turns to Greek philosophy. Plato provides a method of enquiry and judgement for him that was unavoidably missing from Christian faith, but could in turn be employed in order to justify religious truth and morality.

What then was the social role of this renewed justification of Christian doctrines? And how did this role, which necessitated the use of reason for the defence of dogma, affect the meaning and function of Christian faith? Jowett's writings make clear that his translation of Plato was not intended to be a merely philological or academic enterprise. While he used this text extensively to teach students of Greek at Oxford, his intention in writing it, as he suggests, could not be reduced to academic interests. Instead, his aim was to revive Plato's thought as an alternative to a world within which "knowledge is reduced to sensation", "virtue is reduced to feeling" and "happiness or good to pleasure"; to a society within which "human nature is dried up"; to a philosophy within which "ideals of a whole or of a state, or of a law of duty, or of a divine perfection" have become out of place (1892: 4. 173). In short, he sought to employ Plato as an alternative to both the commercial reality of modern bourgeois societies and the liberal-utilitarian ideology that sustained these societies. Platonic idealism (the characterisation is Jowett's) could serve him for this purpose because Plato had reacted, in his view, against the same form of moral and social debasement, Jowett himself sought to question.[224] As he put it,

> the great enemy of Plato is the world, not exactly in the theological sense, yet in one not wholly different – the world as the hater of truth and lover of appearance, occupied in the pursuit of gain and pleasure rather than of knowledge, banded together against the few good and wise men, and devoid of true education (1892: 4. 287).[225]

These statements are only partly an attack on utilitarian philosophers. Their real aim is precisely the nineteenth-century world to which Jowett refers: a society which understands itself merely in terms of utility and which cannot maintain higher ideals; which orients its everyday practice in accordance with the pursuit of gain and pleasure; which can no longer

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[224] Jowett's position was again presaged by Blackie's thought, who described his contemporary world as deluded by "a surface morality", "a morality of convenience and utility" with which "the popular Greek Sophist in Plato's day was perfectly contended", but against which Plato reacted. Blackie further suggested that Plato's hostility to the Athenian democracy stemmed precisely from this attempt at criticising such a superficial society "which he regarded as based on principles fundamentally vicious, and contrary to the eternal proprieties of the universe. For this reason, his thought must be embraced and carefully studied by our nation, Blackie suggested, a nation which is not altogether one of "shopkeepers", but seeks to believe "in something better than the mere mass of material 'production' which is the idol of certain schools and political economies" (1858: 38, 41).

[225] That view had a significant impact on late nineteenth-century readings of Plato can be found in a number of school and university editions of the Platonic works. The editor George Stock, for example, described Socrates as a martyr for philosophy whose *Apology* from the pen of Plato "shows us philosophy tried before the bar of passing public opinion, condemned to drink the bitter juice of the hemlock, and justified before the ages" (1887: 5).

judge the good and the right, as it is totally devoid of genuine education. It is against this society, Jowett writes, that the translation is directed, and in particular against those aspects of society which seem to resemble and reenergize the "debased" and "dishonest" Sophistic spirit. For the ancient Sophist, Jowett asserted, resembles "a Proteus", "who takes the likeness" of "rhetoricians, lawyers, statesmen, poets" – in short all of those men who corrupt the world as much as they are corrupted by it (ibid.: 287).

If Jowett had no belief in the common man, whom he saw as plagued by a self-interested individualism that left him unable to pursue high ideals, it is because he totally identified the 'common people' with the nineteenth-century middle classes. In the habits and values of these classes he recognised the thought-mode and ethics of all majorities. For this reason his political contemplation stood not only against liberal-democratic ideas, but also against any kind of egalitarian politics. The people, according to Jowett, cannot have an active and creative role in the political life of a community, precisely because they lack true knowledge and ethics. At best, the common man, described, as we saw, by Protagoras as a "creator of justice", becomes in Jowett's translation an "artificer" of it, subjected to moral and political principles which transcend his potential for judgement and choice. As the translation states in relation to the Athenian citizens,

> ... he who appears to you to be the worst of those who have been brought up in laws and *human society*, would appear to be a just man and *an artificer of justice* if he were to be compared with men who had no education, or courts of justice, or laws, or any constraints forcing them incessantly to the practice of virtue – with savages ... (1875: 152)[226]

The translation renders the source concept δημιουργὸν by the term "artificer", which evokes the idea of a "craftsman" and a "maker" (especially one who follows an industrial handicraft) but also the notion of a cunning person, a trickster and a deviser[227] – a rewriting which is hardly relatable to the idea of a creator of justice. Jowett revised this choice in the third edition of his translation, in which he used Mill's phrase 'master of justice', but translated the source notion of 'human society' by the term 'humanities'. As he writes,

> ... he who appears to you to be the worst of those who have been brought up in laws and *humanities*, would appear to be a just man and *a master of justice* if he were to be compared with men who had no education, no courts of justice, or laws, or any restraints upon them which compelled them to practice virtue – with the savages for example ... (1892: 1. 148-149)

The phrase 'master of justice' does not have the negative connotations of the term 'artificer'. Yet, by presenting the Athenians as people who have been brought up "in laws and

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[226] The source text is quoted above.
[227] Cf. OED s.v. 'artificer', 'artifice'.

humanities" rather than human society (as the original says) the translator distinguishes them from the rest of the 'common people' and makes the statement inapplicable to the majorities he wishes to criticise.

A similar logic informed the second translation of *Protagoras* during this period, made by Cary Henry. As this stated,

> ... the man who appears to you the most unjust of those who are trained in the laws, and among civilized men, is just and a proficient in justice when compared with men, who have neither instruction no courts of justice, nor laws, nor any necessity that constantly compels them to attend to virtue, but may be considered as savages ... (1888: 150-151)

The translation initially transforms the source phrase ἐν ... ἀνθρώποις τεθραμμένων, by the employment of the concept of "civilized men", thus locating Protagoras' social model within the civil rather than the political sphere. But more than, this Henry also deletes the Protagorean representation of the people of Athens as "creators" of justice. His work talks instead about proficiency; the capacity to understand and follow the laws constituted by authorities. Thus, while he acknowledged that all men who are brought up in a 'civilised' society could attain a proficient knowledge of justice, he was also convinced that no common man is able to set up the standards and establish the ideals by which justice and virtue should be defined.

If then the nineteenth-century social world was in need of such standards and the people of the time were claimed unable to define them, how could these be established and cultivated? In his answer to this question Jowett finds himself in full agreement with Matthew Arnold. Both these writers found in the 'State' the only locus of social truth, justice and morality.[228] This conviction provides Jowett with the key to an interpretation of Plato's philosophy, in the context of which

> justice is the order of the State, and the State is the visible embodiment of justice, under the conditions of human society. The one is the soul and the other is the body, and the Greek ideal of the State, as of the individual, is a fair mind and a fair body. In Hegelian phraseology, *the state is the reality of which justice is the idea* (1892: 3. vi)

This assertion is not taken to contradict Jowett's idealisation of Christianity. On the contrary, it posits the 'State' as the realisation of a transcendent, divinely established justice, and religious truth as the soul that animates the body of the state.

It is precisely this belief that informs Jowett's translation of a description of the Athenian democracy by Protagoras, in which the Sophist points out that the Athenian city

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[228] It is not coincidental that Jowett believed that of all of the works of Plato only the *Laws* "shows so deep an insight into the sources of human evil" (1871: 4.17).

teaches its young members its laws and constrains them *both* to govern and be governed according to them:

> ἡ πόλις αὖ τούς τε νόμους ἀναγκάζει μανθάνειν καὶ κατὰ τούτους ζῆν καθάπερ παράδειγμα ... καὶ ἡ πόλις νόμους ὑπογράψασα ... κατὰ τούτους ἀναγκάζει καὶ ἄρχειν καὶ ἄρχεσθαι· ὃς δ' ἂν ἐκτὸς βαίνῃ τούτων, κολάζει, καὶ ὄνομα τῇ κολάσει ταύτῃ καὶ παρ' ὑμῖν καὶ ἄλλοθι πολλαχοῦ, ὡς εὐθυνούσης τῆς δίκης, εὐθῦναι (326d-e).

Jowett translated the passage as follows:

> the *state* compels them [the children] to learn the laws ...[and] the city outlines the laws ... and compels us *to exercise and obey authority* in accordance with those ... and he who transgresses [the laws] *is to be* corrected, or, in other words called into account, which is a term used ... seeing that *justice calls men to account* (1875:151, my italics).

The translation introduces some substantial changes into the source text. By replacing the notion of the city by the notion of the state in the first phrase of the passage, it constitutes a distinction between the state as a locus of power, and the main body of a social community, which was absent in Protagoras' description of the Athenian democracy. Consequently Jowett transformed the characterisation of the Athenian citizens as capable of governing and being governed according to laws (καὶ ἄρχειν καὶ ἄρχεσθαι), by presenting them as compelled to "exercise and obey authority" – a term that is not found in the source text. Finally, in the translation it is not the city, i.e. the social community, which is both the source and the guardian of its laws, as is asserted in the source text. What is implied by the use of the passive voice (he who transgresses [the laws] *is to be* corrected, or, in other words called to account) and the replacement of the πόλις – which is the subject of punishment in the original – by the notion of "justice", is the location of legal authority in an abstract conception of justice, whose binding power exists irrespective of the political thought and action of the city itself. The revision of the translation in the third edition of *Protagoras* brings the source text even closer to the late nineteenth-century pursuit of authoritative ideals and further from the conditions of Athenian democracy. As the translator writes,

> The state ... compels them to learn the laws, *and live after the pattern which they furnish and not after their own fancies*; ... the city draws the laws ... these are given to the young man, *in order to guide him in his conduct whether he is commanding or obeying*; and he who transgresses them is to be corrected, or in other words called into account, which is a term used ... seeing that justice calls men into account (1892:147-148).

The effect of the phrase "not after their own fancies", which is absent from the source text, is to indicate that the people would tend to pursue a life that lacks any form of order and social respect, unless they are 'compelled' (the term is repeated several times in the translation) by the state to follow the laws. Furthermore the translation of the phrase "ἡ πόλις νόμους

ὑπογράψασα ... κατὰ τούτους ἀναγκάζει καὶ ἄρχειν καὶ ἄρχεσθαι" (which emphasises that in the context of the city the same citizens would both exercise *and* (καὶ) obey the authority of the social body) introduces by the use of the disjunctive 'or' (as a translation of 'and') a sharp division between those people who would 'command' and those who would 'obey' in the functioning of the state; an idea which can only be attributed to Jowett's belief in the necessity of social hierarchies and not to Protagoras' description of the Athenian democracy.

Cary's translation ostensibly maintained the idea that the people govern and are simultaneously governed in a democratic society. Yet it did so by substantially qualifying the Protagorean statement, through the translation of the source term πόλις by the concept of the 'state':

> The *state* still further compels them [the children] to learn the laws, and to live with them as a pattern, that they may not act at random [sic] after their own inclinations ... *the state having prescribed laws* ... compels them both to govern and be governed according to these, but whoso transgresses them it punishes; and the name given to this chastisement ... is correction, since punishment corrects (1888: 149-150, my italics).

The translation radically transforms the idea that the 'city', that is, the people as an institutionalised collective prescribe laws, canonise the education of the youth in accordance with them and punish whoever transgresses them. In Cary's translation, it is again the 'state', as an institution that is not only separated from the social body, but also stands above and beyond the judgement of the people, that is responsible for the establishment and enforcement of law and justice.

Jowett's and Cary's translations project onto *Protagoras* an authoritarian and oppressive viewpoint which cannot be found in the source text. Their position, as will be further discussed in the next chapter, voices the concerns of a great number of nineteenth-century intellectuals who were not theoretically opposed to the idea of autonomous pursuit of knowledge that had been advanced since the previous century, but were nevertheless genuinely convinced that within the world that surrounded them no 'common people' could be successfully engaged in determining the 'truths' and 'morality' of a social body. Their perception and critique of their society exhibits a clarity that is largely missing from the writings of utilitarians and liberals, who were certainly more reluctant to dispute the presumed sovereignty and value of individuals. When Jowett writes in his comments on Plato's translations that "we boast of an individualism which is not freedom, but rather an artificial result of the industrial state of modern Europe" (1892: 3. clxxviii) he seems to be far more aware of the constituted nature and historical limits of the individual in bourgeois

societies than both Mill and Grote. His crucial mistake, however, is that instead of seeing the 'man' he criticises as indeed the historical product of the industrial state of modern Europe, he takes him as an absolute, and then seeks an alternative to him in an authority that transcends man absolutely. From a position of such an enlightened idealism, Jowett's political conclusions become confused and contradictory. He values a social system within which the highest education is available to all and every human being is able to develop freely while rejecting utilitarian interests in profit and power. He nevertheless visualises this utopian alternative as the product of an 'idea of good' that is determined in advance and establishes an order that does not derive from the will and judgement of the people. Thus, in the introduction to his translation of the *Gorgias* he delineates the features of the "true statesman" who would materialise his ideas as someone

> who brings order out of disorder ... His thoughts are fixed not on the power or riches or extension of territory, but on an ideal state, in which all the citizens have an equal chance of health and life, and the highest education is within the reach of all, and the moral and intellectual qualities of every individual are freely developed, and 'the idea of good' is the animating principle of the whole (1892: 5 308-309).

The true statesman does not stand as a metonymy for a subject. His crucial feature lies in his capacity to bring order and organise a social whole. The power behind him is the power of state-authority which is imposed on individuals irrespective of their will or capacity for criticism. As such, the "true statesman" stands as the embodiment of an authoritarian figure. Yet the ideals attributed to this figure articulate, at the same time, a far more pervasive critique of the oppression, alienation and annihilation of subjectivity in bourgeois societies than all previous evocations of utilitarian principles.

CHAPTER 5

FROM AN 'ETHICS OF VIRTUE' TO AN 'ETHICS OF DUTY': TRANSLATIONS OF ARISTOTLE'S *NICOMACHEAN ETHICS* AND THE CONSTITUTION OF CIVIL MORALITY

Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* was among the most influential philosophical treatises on ethics in nineteenth-century Britain and certainly the most frequently translated and discussed Greek philosophical text of the time. If the limited study and translations of Plato until the last decades of the century justified Mill's and Blackie's complaints regarding the lack of Platonic scholarship, this was by no means the case with the *Ethics*, which acquired a significant position in the curriculum of *Literae Humaniores* at Oxford (Clarke 1959: 101) and was constantly translated and discussed throughout the century.[229]

The number of translations of the treatise is impressive, especially when compared to the translations of Platonic writings. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, the *Ethics* was read mainly in John Gillies' and, less frequently, in Thomas Taylor's translation. Gillies translated the *Ethics and Politics* together in 1797 and his work, which was reprinted four times during the nineteenth century (1804; 1813; 1823; 1893), was very influential for all other translators (with the exception of Taylor) until the middle of the century. Taylor's translation was only published once (1818) and did not enjoy major popularity (for reasons that are related to the criticism of his translation of Plato[230]) although it did receive a glowing review by an important Oxford scholar, Edward Copleston.[231] These works were followed by two anonymous translations written in 1819 (re-edited with revisions in 1826) and 1846,[232] both published at Oxford, and then by D. P. Chase's translation in 1847, which was reprinted three times (1861; 1866; 1877) and revised by George Henry Lewes (1890). The first part of the century closes with R. W. Browne's translation written in 1850. This period is marked by a publication of major significance for the study of Aristotle, Alexander Grant's annotated edition of the *Ethics*, which appeared in two volumes, published in 1857 and 1858 respectively, and was published again another three times, each one with revisions of both the

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[229] With the exception of *Poetics*, the *Logic* and (at the end of the century) the *Politics* no other work of Aristotle seems to have been particularly important for nineteenth-century scholarly interests, and even discussions on these works cannot measure up either to the length or influence of the debate on Aristotle's ethical thought (Cf. Turner 1981: 322-326).

[230] For a further discussion of this issue see chapter 4.

[231] Copleston praised Taylor for both faithfulness and his 'plainness' and 'integrity' in his writing of the target language. As he wrote "I perceive in your translation, whenever I examine it, that prime virtue of a translator, a complete subordination and subserviency to his original; – no tampering with the exact meaning in order to evade a difficulty, or to round a period. There is also manly plainness and integrity which commands respect" (Taylor 1818: vi).

[232] I have not been able to view this translation.

essays and the commentary on the Greek text (1866; 1874; 1885). Grant's work was not a translation, but a critical edition with commentary, accompanied by a number of essays on Aristotle's ethical thought. It nevertheless offered an interpretation of the *Ethics* that had an immense influence on subsequent translators and commentators, and also provided many translations of isolated passages in the extended footnotes that followed the original. These constituted the beginnings of Grant's attempt to offer a complete translation of the *Ethics*, as he promised at the end of the second volume, which was, however, never realised. Nine further translations were published during the second part of the nineteenth century and one in the first years of the twentieth. Robert Williams translated the *Ethics* in 1869 and his work was reprinted twice, in 1876 and 1891. Rev. Giles' translation[233] appeared in 1870 and was followed by Walter M. Hatch's translation in 1879, George Stock's partial translation of the *Ethics* (books i-iv and x) in 1886, Frank H. Peters' translation in 1881 (reprinted in 1886), Basford de Wilson's partial translation (books i-iv, x) in 1884, Samuel H. Jeyes' partial translation (books i-iv, x) in 1890, and James E. C. Welldon's translation in 1892. In the same year J. A. Stewart published his *Notes on the 'Nicomachean Ethics' of Aristotle* (1892) which was – and for many still is – the most extensive treatment of the work in English (Turner 1981: 366). It was followed by Franklin Harvey's partial translation (books i-iv, x) in 1897 and finally L. H. G. Greenwood's translation in 1909.[234] All of these works, as we shall shortly discuss, were written in the context of an extended, often passionate debate on the meaning and modern significance of Aristotle's ethical precepts which lasted until the end of the century.

But why did the *Ethics* become so important for nineteenth-century thought? Turner provides us with a useful framework towards an answer to this question. He suggests that the *Ethics* particularly suited the ideal of "education of character" that was emphasised and pursued in Oxford at the time. As a means of training young men for careers in church, politics and the civil services, it not only offered a reading of "charm" and "good sense", but was also a work which upheld the social elitism that was so evidently part of Oxford life at the time. Most significantly though, Turner suggests, the *Ethics* was a "safe" book, in contrast perhaps with some of the Platonic dialogues. Aristotle did not stir youthful mystical imagination and left people secure in holding onto their property and living with the conventions of their family circles. He praised a collective social life without erasing individuality for the sake of the collective, he encouraged citizens to improve their society in

[233] This translation was obviously written for the use of pupils and students as it cites short phrases of the original and gives a literal rendering right next to them.

its existing structures, and also to uphold the prescriptive role of current 'social opinion' as the basis of moral behaviour; ideas which could only serve to maintain and sustain the *status quo* of the age (1981: 324-325). Clarke's historical account of the educational programmes of the period seems to confirm this position. "It was the pride of Oxford", Clarke argued

> that her students did not learn their philosophy from men who might mislead the young with ideas of their own, but by 'the regular and docile study of a fixed theory', that is to say, of Aristotle's *Ethics* (1959: 101)

From the first decades of the nineteenth-century Aristotle's ethical philosophy became a significant alternative to utilitarian precepts and was steadily employed as a model for the advancement of social awareness, respect for authority, self-discipline and compliance with duty. While in the course of the century the text was appropriated by a wide variety of discourses, which were not always compatible with each other in terms of their aims and social function, the great majority of them took as their starting point a conception of moral subjects as personally and socially responsible agents, rather than self-interested individuals. The meaning of Aristotle's work was thus read by translators from the perspective of an ethics of duty: the attempt to establish a set of universal principles that determine personal and social behaviour on the grounds of what is 'right', irrespective of the relation of this right to the agent's interests in a strict sense of the term. In other words, what was important in this context was to determine how people should live in order to avoid socially wrong and amoral behaviour, even if such a definition of moral propriety was in sharp contrast with men's personal well-being.

While many tenets of the *Ethics* were in accordance with the particular meanings bestowed on 'duty' by nineteenth-century rewriters and translators, the logic and purposes that underwrote the ancient work could not have been further from those of an ethics of duty. For Aristotle the ethical aim of human life was 'εὐδαιμονία', a term that is normally translated into English as 'happiness' (and this is the translation I shall use to render the term), but originally meant something different to what is commonly understood today by happiness. Εὐδαιμονία evoked as inseparable the ideas of 'acting well' and 'well-being'; it entailed that ethics should be able to teach men how to pursue a life that leads to 'happiness' rather than morality in the modern sense of the term. Therein lay precisely the distance between Greek and modern ethics: a distance between 'well-being' and 'right'. For while the Greek ethics, as MacIntyre has argued, asks "what am I to do if I am to fare well?" and conceives the attainment of 'virtue' as a contribution to this purpose, modern ethics asks

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[234] The full titles of these translations can be found in the bibliography under the name of the translators

"what am I to do if I am to do right?" and it asks the question in a way that implies that doing what is right is quite independent from faring well (1966[1]; 1998: 84, 59). It was this distance that nineteenth-century translators sought to confront, manipulate and, to some extent, bridge.

To be sure, Aristotle did not seek to equate ethics with pleasure and was not less eager to articulate some norms for the appraisal of social behaviour than his nineteenth-century British rewriters. On the contrary, his work voices the concerns of a time that was precisely in need of such norms, of criteria by which the 'good' for human beings could be defined in universalisable terms. In contrast to the ethics of the Homeric period, in the framework of which central judgements that could be passed upon men, as MacIntyre explains, pertained exclusively to the way men fulfilled their allocated social role, and therefore precluded an evaluative vocabulary of wider application (ibid.: 5-13), in the context of the democratic *polis* in which Aristotle writes, such social distinctions continued to play a significant role in the appraisal of virtue, but had nevertheless to be reconciled with a novel human trait that was dissociated from them, namely citizenship. While in the years that preceded the classical era the direct object and addressee of ethical discourse is man as a king, a lyre-player, a sculptor, a warrior and so on, in Athens, these categories are maintained, but also complemented and transformed, by their relation to the overarching notion of the citizen. The object of Aristotle's thought becomes man as a social being, as a member of the *polis*. Aristotle's main concern throughout the *Ethics* is therefore how man should live in the context of the city in order to attain happiness and virtue – the two terms cannot be dissociated – as a social and political being. Let us then study how this concern was understood and rewritten in the context of nineteenth-century Britain.

1. An Attainment of Transcendence? From a Christianised *Ethics* to a Secularised Christianity

For the first part of the nineteenth century the overwhelming majority of translations and rewritings of the *Ethics* read the text from the perspective of an explicitly Christian morality. Most translators sought to find in Aristotle an early proponent of Christian values, to demonstrate that the *Ethics*, as the Aristotelian scholar Renn Dickson Hampden wrote,

> contain nothing which a Christian may dispense with, no precept of life which is not an element of the Christian character, and that they only fail in elevating the heart and mind to objects which it needed Divine Wisdom to reveal, and a Divine Example to realise to the life (1831[1], 1862: 123).

The ancient treatise, it was stated, was admittedly "incomplete", as it was directed "solely to the improvement of man in this present life", Hampden suggests, but nevertheless provided

precisely those principles that are identical to the Christian ethos and "tend to elevate [man] to the perfection of his nature" (ibid.: 123). As was the case with Jowett's Platonic translations, this parallel provided at first a renewed justification of religious certainty. For if it could be proved that the Truth revealed by God was identical to the truth Aristotle discovers through rational contemplation, then Christianity could find a strong and rather unexpected ally against all doubts over the validity of its truths and ethical tenets. Thus while all the translators of the period recognised that, unlike Christian doctrines, Aristotle's work was bound to concerns of the earthly world, they sought in his philosophy one further support of the immortal truth of the Gospel. This is precisely the logic by which Gillies introduces his translation of the *Ethics and Politics*:

> In Aristotle's philosophy, man is the judge of man, in Christianity, the judge of man is God Philosophy confines itself to the perishing interests of the present world; Christianity, looking beyond those interests, takes a loftier aim, inspires the mind with nobler motives and promises to adorn it with perfections, worthy of its inestimably valuable rewards. Yet to the man of piety, it may be a matter of edification, to compare the virtue of philosophical firmness with the grace of Christian patience, and to *observe how nearly the rules discovered by reason and experience, as most conducive to the happiness of our present state, coincide with those precepts which are given in the Gospel in order to fit us for a better* (1797: 1.174 my italics)

Such an attempt to find reason at the heart of religious dogma had its roots in the philosophy of Bishop Joseph Butler (1692-1752), whose *Analogy of Religion* (1736), as Turner points out, proposed a similar parallel between the revealed and the natural world, and sought to argue that the Christians believed nothing by revelation that they did not also already believe according to reason; that "the modes of reasoning used in regard to nature were the same as those used in regard to the doctrines of revealed religion" (1981: 330). Butler was at the time as significant in academic institutions, and particularly at Oxford, as Aristotle was, and his book was the only modern text included in the reading list of *Literae Humaniores*.[235] Most significantly, Butler's work was explicitly related to Aristotelian philosophy and his name was mentioned in the same breath with that of Aristotle: "We at Oxford", as Matthew Arnold wrote, "used to read our Aristotle or our Butler with the same absolute faith in the classicality of their matter as in the classicality of Homer's forms" (1876[1];1972: 12). In this context, it is hardly coincidental that almost all of the translators of the *Ethics* during this period felt the need to use Butler in order to discuss Aristotle's thought either in the footnotes or in the introductions to the translated texts.

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[235] This information is taken from Turner 1981: 327

But how exactly were the *Ethics* related to Christian morality? The first point that emerges from the translations is the claim that ethical precepts are innate in human nature, and thus every individual can truly fulfil nature by performing his moral, i.e. Christian, immanent duty. This postulate implied that there is no essential difference between duty and real human interests, in the sense that the performance of duty must be recognised as the utmost interest of every human being, the only means by which man can attain eternal happiness. It did not however mean that people are capable of realising this interest independently of God's revelation. Quite the contrary; what was maintained was that while all men desire the 'good' promised to them by divinity, the rules and goals by which they lead their lives are not necessarily compatible with it, unless the 'supreme', 'ultimate Good' is revealed to them by faith.

1.1 The 'Good' as a Divine Concept: The Emergence of an 'Ethics of Duty'

At the very beginning of the *Ethics* Aristotle delineates the relation between things at which we aim and things which are good, and seeks to suggest that there is an inextricable connection between the two, that the meaning of 'good' should be conceived of in terms of people's goals and purposes. As he writes

> Πᾶσα τέχνη καὶ πᾶσα μέθοδος, ὁμοίως δὲ πρᾶξίς τε καὶ προαίρεσις, ἀγαθοῦ τινὸς ἐφίεσθαι δοκεῖ· διὸ καλῶς ἀπεφήναντο τἀγαθὸν οὗ πάντ' ἐφίεται (i.i.1).

"Every craft and every inquiry, and similarly every action and project, seems to aim at some good; hence the good has been well defined as that at which everything aims" as MacIntyre writes in a translation of the passage.[236] What this opening phrase of the *Ethics* clarifies is that the 'good' should be defined in terms of what men seek and desire. As MacIntyre suggests, it is the "good in the sense in which it appears in human language" and "cannot be the name of a transcendent object". This means that to call an act or a state of affairs good is to place it as "a proper object of desire"; an equation that sustains the Aristotelian identification of the good with happiness in the sense of 'εὐδαιμονία' (1966[1]; 1998: 57, 61).[237]

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[236] See also Ross', Ackrill's and Urmson's translation: "Every art and every inquiry, and similarly every action and pursuit, is thought to aim at some good, and for this reason the good has rightly been declared to be that at which all things aim (1980[1]; 1998:1).

[237] MacIntyre provides an illuminating example in order to explain this point: if we imagine that we are trying to learn the language of a strange tribe and a linguist points at one of the words of this tribe as the word that is to be translated by '*good*' in Aristotle's sense, but this word is never applied to what was pursued, although its use is always accompanied, say, by smiles, then we would know in advance that the linguist was wrong (1966[1], 1998: 58)

The first translation of the passage during the period in question, written by Gillies (1747-1836) at the end of the eighteenth-century and reprinted consistently until the 1830s, rewrote the Aristotelian statement as follows:

> Since every art and every kind of knowledge, as well as all the actions and deliberations of men, constantly aim *at something which they call good*, good in general may be justly defined as 'that which all things *desire*' (1797: I 149 my italics)

The translation introduces an important alteration to the meaning of the source text. While Aristotle indicates that the 'good' is inseparable from human pursuits, Gillies' translation suggests that art, knowledge, actions and deliberations of men aim at something which "*they call* good", thus introducing a division between the 'good' as a human aim and another kind of 'good', which is not defined by people's goals. This idea is further sustained by the translation of the second phrase of the passage, which transforms the source-text's assertion that "the good is that at which all things aim" into the statement that the 'good' can be defined as that which all things (i.e. human thought and action) 'desire', but at which they do not necessarily aim.

A similar logic seems to inform an anonymous translation of the *Ethics* written in 1819, in which the translator chooses to qualify the Aristotelian statement by redefining the 'good' of the source text as the '*summum bonum*', the 'supreme good', and substituting the idea that every inquiry aims at some good for the creed that 'every institution' does so. As the translator wrote

> Every art and every institution, and in like manner every action as well as predilection, seems to aim at some good: wherefore men well defined *the good* [or *summum bonum*] to be "that which all things desire" (1819: 1)

Chase's translation, written at the middle of the century follows a similar pattern. As the translator writes:

> Every art, and every science reduced to a teachable form, and in like manner every action and *moral choice*, aims, it is thought at some good: for which reason a common and by no means a bad description of the Chief Good is, "that which all things aim at" (1847: 1)

Chase translates the source term 'the good' by 'the Chief Good' and substitutes the Aristotelian idea that every premeditated, deliberate choice (προαίρεσις) aims at the good for the assertion that only a 'moral choice' can do so. What is more, the definitive statement that "the good has been well defined as that at which everything aims" is somewhat put into question by its characterisation as "a common and by no means a bad description"; a phrase which does not deny the Aristotelian assertion but nevertheless implies that there may be a more sufficient definition of 'good' and the 'Chief Good'.

The only translator who does not follow this pattern during this period is Taylor, whose work does substitute the verb 'aim at' for the verb 'desire' and italicises 'the good' in the second phrase of the passage (a choice which may have implied a distinction between the 'good' and the 'supreme good'), but nevertheless avoids an explicit evocation of a notion of 'chief good' and maintains the definition of good as identical with human goals and aspirations. As Taylor writes,

> Every art and every method, and in like manner every action and deliberate choice, appear to aspire after a certain good. Hence, it is well said, that *the good* is that which all things desire (1818: 3)

Taylor, as is known from his biography, was the least interested in ideas of transcendence articulated in the context of Christian religion and used every opportunity to attack Christianity and declare his pagan creed (Raine 1969: 3-48). Contrariwise, the rest of the translations written during the first decades of the century seem to adapt the obviously secular meaning of 'good' that appears in Aristotle's work to the idea of 'good' that is derived from divine revelation. Unlike the good which is found in human languages, the 'supreme good' is fully determined by a power which lies beyond the judgement of people and societies. Thus Aristotle's *Ethics* becomes a text which established the precepts of an essentially Christian morality in a pre-Christian context. Hampden gave a succinct justification of such reading by arguing that

> the ethical writings of Aristotle, composed amidst the darkness of heathen superstition, abound with pure and just sentiments ... [and] tend to elevate [man] to the perfection of his nature ... They are directed, it must be allowed, solely to the improvement of man in his present life. But so just are the principles on which he builds that improvement, that we may readily extend them to those higher views of our nature and condition to which our eyes, by the light of Divine Revelation, have been opened (1831[1], 1862: 122-123)

Aristotle drew a distinction between the 'good' and the 'best of goods' or 'perfect good', which is defined in the *Ethics* as that thing which we pursue for its own sake and is not a means for the achievement of other goals (i.ii.1; i.vi.9). Yet this assumption did not imply in his philosophy that the 'best of goods' should be identified with an immanent entity, which would have been identified, in the ancient Greek context, with the Platonic concept of the Form of 'good'. Aristotle is clear in his disagreement with Plato. Even if this transcendent 'good' existed, he writes, even if there were some unitary being which is the 'Good' that stands as separated from human conceptions, as an absolute, it would certainly not have been practicable or attainable by man. It thus falls outside our enquiries and interests. For the good which we are now seeking, he argues, is precisely a good that stands within human reach (i.vi. 13).

If there is then an attainable goal, Aristotle suggests, which we desire and pursue for its own sake and do not choose it for the sake of something else, that would plainly be the 'good' and indeed the 'best of goods' (i.ii.1). Having delineated these features of the 'perfect good', Aristotle's argument advances by giving the name of the 'perfect good': εὐδαιμονία.

> τὴν γὰρ εὐδαιμονίαν καὶ οἱ πολλοὶ καὶ οἱ χαρίεντες λέγουσιν, τὸ δ' εὖ ζῆν καὶ τὸ εὖ πράττειν ταὐτὸν ὑπολαμβάνουσι τῷ εὐδαιμονεῖν. περὶ δὲ τῆς εὐδαιμονίας, τί ἐστιν, ἀμφισβητοῦσι, καὶ οὐχ ὁμοίως οἱ πολλοὶ τοῖς σοφοῖς ἀποδιδόασιν (i.iv.1-2).

Both the educated and the 'many' call this good εὐδαιμονία – and regard the life of a man who 'fares well' and 'acts well' as happy. Yet what constitutes happiness, Aristotle writes, is a matter of dispute and the opinion of the many is not identical to the view of men of wisdom.

The passage, which articulates one of the most significant postulates of the *Ethics*, was translated by Gillies as follows:

> Its name is universally acknowledged; both the learned and the multitude call it happiness But as to the thing itself, there is a wide diversity of opinion between philosophers and the vulgar (1797: 1. 152)

The translation completely omits the source-text's definition of εὐδαιμονία as a condition of 'faring well' and 'acting well'. Contrariwise, it points out that it is *only* the name of the 'supreme good' on which both the 'learned' and the 'multitude' agree at a universal level. Gillies' translation proceeds by arguing that the 'vulgar' "place happiness"

> in things visible and palpable in pleasure, wealth, honour; some philosophers again think that besides all these particular and relative goods, there is a good in itself *absolutely*, the cause of this quality in other things, which deserve to be called good merely because *they participate in this absolute goodness* (1797: 1. 152 my italics)

This is the translation of the following Aristotelian passage:

> Οἱ μὲν γὰρ τῶν ἐναργῶν τι καὶ φανερῶν, οἷον ἡδονὴν ἢ πλοῦτον ἢ τιμήν ... ἔνιοι δ' ὤοντο παρὰ τὰ πολλὰ ταῦτα ἀγαθὰ ἄλλο τι καθ' αὑτὸ εἶναι, ὃ καὶ τούτοις πᾶσιν αἴτιόν ἐστι τοῦ εἶναι ἀγαθά (i.iv.3)[238]

The translation follows the distinction that is made in the source text between the opinion of the many and that of the few. It adds however the characterisation of the 'good' that is perceived by the few as an absolute and hence suggests that all other things acquire the name and quality of being 'good' by participating in this "*absolute* goodness". The 'Good' in this rendering becomes an obvious metonymy for 'Divinity', which actualises an immanent and

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[238] Cf. "Ordinary people identify it [happiness] with some obvious and visible good, such as pleasure or wealth or honour ... and it has been held by some thinkers that beside the many good things we have mentioned, there exists another Good, that is good in itself, and stands to all those goods as the cause of their being good" (Rackham 1934: 11). See also "for the former [the many] think it [happiness] is a plain and obvious thing, like pleasure, wealth, or honour; ... Now some thought that apart from these many goods there is another which is good in itself and causes the goodness of all these as well" (Ross, Ackrill and Urmson 1980[1]:1998: 5)

universal standard of virtue, while for Aristotle the 'best of goods' is that specific human aim which is pursued for its own sake, that 'thing' which is the cause of happiness in itself and cannot be sought for the purpose of something else. Most importantly, since this passage takes, in the translation, the place of Aristotle's definition of happiness that is omitted by Gillies, it conveys the idea that happiness consists of a life lived in accordance with "absolute goodness", irrespective of whether this is a life that is happy or miserable. Consistent with this choice Gillies omits in his translation the last sections of Book Seven of the *Ethics*, which examine the issue of pleasure, although he does translate the sections on pleasure of the tenth book. In these parts of his work Aristotle does not identify happiness with pleasure in a trivial sense of the term, but nevertheless stresses that no man suffering distress and misfortunes throughout his life can be called εὐδαίμονων. This idea disappears in Gillies' translation.

Taylor relates the 'perfect good' to 'earthly' happiness, but is equally doubtful of the Aristotelian meaning of εὐδαιμονία. As he puts it,

> By name, therefore, it is nearly acknowledged by most men; for both the vulgar and the learned call it *felicity*. *But they conceive that to live well and to act well are the same thing as to be happy*. Concerning felicity, however, what it is, they are dubious (1818: 8 my italics)

The use of the term 'felicity', which conveyed the connotations of prosperity and worldly success,[239] seems to be closer to that aspect of the source-text's meaning that evoked the value of 'well-being'. Yet in the very next sentence of the translation Taylor renders Aristotle's text in such a way that this precept is disputed: "*But* they conceive that to live well and to act well are the same thing as to be happy", the translator writes, implying by the addition of the word 'but' that this conception of 'happiness' is evidently a wrong one, or at least one from which Aristotle sought to distance himself.

Browne's translation, written in 1850, follows the pattern established by Gillies' work. It suggests that while the name of the 'supreme good' is an issue on which both the 'vulgar' and the 'educated' agree, they merely suppose that to live well and do well have the same meaning as happiness:

> As to its name, indeed, almost all men are agreed, for both the vulgar and the educated call it *happiness*: *but they suppose* that to live well and do well are synonymous with being happy. But concerning the nature of happiness they are at variance, and the vulgar do not give the same definition of it as the educated (1850: 5)

As was the case with the previous renderings, this translation presents linguistic features which do not allow the reader to understand εὐδαιμονία as a condition of 'faring well': the beginning of the second phrase of the passage with the word 'but' and the use of the verb

[239] Cf. OED s.v. 'felicity'.

'suppose' imply that it is only the common people who believe that an εὐδαίμων man leads a 'good' and 'moral' life. The real meaning of 'happiness' as the 'best of goods', it is suggested, is nevertheless a different one.

The change in the source text introduced by these translations is by no means an insignificant one. Given the centrality of the concept of 'εὐδαιμονία' in the *Ethics*, the translators in question bring about a radical transformation of Aristotle's position. No matter how closely they may subsequently adhere to the description of the particularised features of virtue and happiness, the whole perspective by which Aristotle delineates these features is radically altered. In the *Ethics* happiness is not related to moral propriety, let alone an externally imposed duty to conform to the 'Good'. If a man is virtuous and simultaneously wretched, as MacIntyre observes, this man is certainly *not* εὐδαίμονων in Aristotelian terms. From this point of view the *Ethics* challenges not only Plato but also the Kantians and puritans to come. It does not begin by seeking an account of goodness, which can be applied to a man suffering, say, torture or injustice. On the contrary, it seeks an ethics which begins with an entirely different question: "in what form of life doing well and faring well may be found together", so that man can achieve worldly happiness? (1966[1]; 1998: 60). The translations we examine ask instead: in what form of life does man act in accordance with a transcendent 'Good', so that his acts can be judged as moral?

The answer Aristotle gives to the question he raises is straightforward. We can arrive at what happiness is for man by ascertaining what is man's distinctive feature and function as a species-being and how these determine his ultimate end, his purpose (τέλος). The virtuous man would be the one who accomplishes this in the best possible way. For as the goodness of a flute-player or a sculptor is thought to reside in their particular work and function, Aristotle argues, so the good of man may be said to reside in the specific work and function of man as a distinctive and unitary 'kind' (i. vii.9-10). What then is this feature which pertains to man and distinguishes him from all other entities? After excluding the acts of living and perception, which man shares with other living creatures, Aristotle concludes that

> λείπεται δὴ πρακτική τις τοῦ λόγου ἔχοντος (τούτου δὲ τὸ μὲν ὡς ἐπιπειθὲς λόγῳ, τὸ δ' ὡς ἔχον καὶ διανοούμενον) (i. iv. 13).

What remains, it is argued, is activity of the rational part of man, which is itself twofold: contemplative, that is, the activity of thinking itself, and those other kinds of acts which are distinguished from pure thought, but follow rational precepts.[240]

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[240] For this reading see MacIntyre 1966[1], 1998: 64. Ross' Ackrill's and Urmson's translation renders the passage as follows "There remains, then an activity of the element that has a rational principle, of this, one part has such a principle in the sense of being obedient to one, the other in the sense of possessing one and exercising thought"

Gillies translated the passage as follows:

> There remains then a life of rational action; *whether he exercises reason himself, or obeys the reason of another* (1797: 1 160 my italics)

The change of the source text is striking. Aristotle suggests a division between rational thought and practice (that is, activities that obey the principles of reason) implying that both of these aspects of rationality, taken as a unity, constitute the exclusive characteristic of humanity. Nowhere in the source text is there an argument that says that a life that fulfils man's function is to obey the reason of another, as Gillies writes – an idea which does not make much sense if one originally assumes that rationality is an essential trait of all human beings.

As with possession by the few, a life guided by reason was not taken by Gillies to constitute the highest and self-sufficient purpose of man. As a trait of the human intellect, reason, in his view, was itself subsumed to a 'supreme good', a purpose that stood beyond human limits and connected man to divinity. Virtue was thus conceived as that form of activity that is guided by an immanent source of the Good, namely God. Let us examine how this creed is articulated in the translation. Aristotle's text provides a complex explanation of a life that actualises man's rational capacity, which suggests that

> διττῶς δὲ καὶ ταύτης λεγομένης τὴν κατ' ἐνέργειαν θετέον· κυριώτερον γὰρ αὖ τη δοκεῖ λέγεσθαι. εἰ δὴ ἐστὶν ἔργον ἀνθρώπου ψυχῆς ἐνέργεια κατὰ λόγον ἢ μὴ ἄνευ λόγου, τὸ δ' αὐτό φαμεν ἔργον εἶναι τῷ γένει τοῦδε καὶ τοῦδε σπουδαίου (ὥσπερ κιθαριστοῦ καὶ σπουδαίου κιθαριστοῦ, καὶ ἁπλῶς δὴ τοῦτ' ἐπὶ πάντων) προστιθεμένης τῆς κατ' ἀρετὴν ὑπεροχῆς πρὸς τὸ ἔργον (κιθαριστοῦ μὲν γὰρ το κιθαρίζειν, σπουδαίου δὲ τὸ εὖ)· εἰ δὴ οὕτως, ἀνθρώπου δὲ τίθεμεν ἔργον ζωήν τινα, ταύτην δὲ ψυχῆς ἐνέργειαν καὶ πράξεις μετὰ λόγου, σπουδαίου δ' ἀνδρός εὖ ταῦτα καὶ καλῶς, ἕκαστον δ' εὖ κατὰ τὴν οἰκείαν ἀρετὴν ἀποτελεῖται· εἰ δὴ οὕτω, τὸ ἀνθρώπινον ἀγαθὸν ψυχῆς ἐνέργεια γίνεται κατ' ἀρετήν, εἰ δὲ πλείους αἱ ἀρεταί, κατὰ τὴν ἀρίστην καὶ τελειοτάτην. ἔτι δ' ἐν βίῳ τελείῳ (i.vii. 14-16).[241]

Gillies' translated the passage as follows:

(1980[1], 1998: 13). See also Rackham's translation: "There remains therefore what may be called the practical life of the rational part of man. (This part has two divisions, one rational as obedient to principle, the other as possessing principle and exercising intelligence)." (1934: 31-33)

[241] "And, as 'life of the rational element' also has two meanings, we must state that life in the sense of activity is what we mean, for this seems to be the more proper sense of the term. Now if the function of man is an activity of soul which follows or implies a rational principle, and if we say 'a so-and-so' and 'a good so-and-so' have a function which is the same in kind, e.g. a lyre-player and a good lyre-player, and so without qualification in all cases, eminence in respect of goodness being added to the name of the function (for the function of the lyre player is to play the lyre, and that of a good lyre-player is to do so well): if this is the case [and we state the function of man to be a certain kind of life, and this to be an activity or actions of the soul implying a rational principle, and the function of a good man to be the good and noble performance of these, and if any action is well performed when it is performed in accordance with the appropriate excellence: if this is the case], human good turns out to be activity of soul exhibiting excellence, and if there are more than one excellence, in accordance with the best and most complete" (Ross, Ackrill and Urmson 1980[1],1998: 13-14).

> In such a life his real business consists, and that man does his business the best, *who acts most rationally through life*, the virtue of each individual of a species, depending on the excellence with which he performs the work peculiar to that species alone *The proper good of man consists then in virtuous energies, that is, in the exercise of virtue continued through life* (1797 1 160 my italics)

The greatest part of Aristotle's argument is omitted in the translation. The source text begins by stating that the ultimate purpose of man is activity of the 'soul' (the meaning of the concept was somewhat equivalent to what we name as 'personality'[242]) in accordance with reason. Given this assumption, Aristotle writes, we can distinguish between different levels of the same kind of activity of which there is a 'best' or 'excellent'. This is virtuous or excellent activity and it can be of different kinds: a good lyre-player, for example, accomplishes a specific kind of excellence, he performs his work in accordance with a kind of virtue. Thus if the subject of activity is man as a social being and if man's distinct purpose is the rational activity of the soul, then good for man is the performance of this activity at an excellent level, that is, in accordance with its own specific virtue. The crucial point not to be missed in this argument is that Aristotle's notion of 'virtue' does not posit a moralising principle; it stands for excellence in the activity of reason. That is to say, the meaning of virtue is exclusively related to the standards of reason and thus the good for man is defined as activity in accordance with the perfect exercise of reason throughout life. By omitting this part of the argument, Gillies' translation presents rationality and 'human virtue' as two separate categories, which are somewhat linked by leading towards the same purpose: the Good. In other words man's virtue no longer derives from his rational capacity, but from a source that is itself constituted outside man's essence and function. Thus, while it is argued that "that man does his business the best, who acts most rationally through life", the "proper good for man" does not merely pertain to reason, but to "virtuous energies", that is, to "the exercise of virtue through life". Both 'rational activity' and 'virtuous energies' stand in harmony, the translation suggests, by ending both sentences which refer to these concepts with the same phrase ("through life"). For 'Energy', as Gillies explains, "is a link in the grand chain, by which [Aristotle] connects the earth with the heavens, and nature with the Deity" (ibid.: 132). "The prime mover" behind all manifestations of energy, "Divinity", "is necessarily immaterial; and therefore indivisible, immoveable [sic] impassive, and invariable". This Divinity sets the measure for human magnitude and excellence, but is not measured by it. God

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[242] As MacIntyre points out, for Aristotle 'soul' should be understood as "form to the body's matter" and we can normally retain the meaning of the concept by speaking of what we name today as 'personality' (1966[1], 1998: 64)

is not "comprehensible by magnitude ... He ever is what he is, existing in energy before time began, since time is only an affection of motion, of which God is the author" (ibid.: 135).

What man loses in the translation is his autonomy. While in the *Ethics* rationality is both the source of and the only criterion for the judgement of what is 'good', in Gillies' rendering the origin of 'virtue' stands beyond any species-being; it is absolutely unthinkable by worldly standards. Aristotle is convinced that it is man who is "the origin of his action", that "ἄνθρωπος εἶναι ἀρχὴ τῶν πράξεων" (3.3.15). Gillies puts God in this position and thereby omits this statement in his translation. What man gains in the translation is a power that can verify the truth of his being and morality beyond all contests and doubts. God embodies and reveals to man the 'Supreme Good' which does not only posit the rules of an 'appropriate' mode of life, but also the road for 'real' human happiness. Human beings are freed from the burden of choice and responsibility. They are assured that the *right* choice has already been made for them and so long as they voluntarily follow this choice, their life must be lived as a self-justifying and happy one – not happy in a mundane and secular sense, but as the realisation of man's true and divine purpose. The 'proof' of such a certainty, we are told, is given by Aristotle himself. The 'fact' that the Aristotelian philosophy provides us with the same idea of 'Good' that is prescribed in the Bible, it is argued by William Fitzgerald in his edition of the *Ethics*, demonstrates the unity of the author of Christian faith and of reason, and therefore the universality of man's duty and purpose. For we can clearly see that even with the power of "unassisted [by revelation] reason" the *Ethics* "can furnish us with some knowledge of duty" that is "conformable ... in all the most fundamental points to the morality of the Gospel". If then

> the author of the universe and the Author of Christianity, the Giver of reason and revelation, be, as we contend, the same Being, it is to be expected that the declarations of His will which we meet with in revelation should correspond with the dictates of the highest and most perfect reason; and the testimony of the heathen moralists prove, that such is the fact (1850 40)

It seems unlikely that such preposterous appropriation of the *Ethics* could have been conceived of, had it not been sustained by the translations under consideration.

The ideal of a 'transcendent' Good which can be applied universally is obviously far from Aristotle's thought. Yet what was its position in the context of the target community? Or, to put the same issue in different terms, with whom, apart from Aristotle, did translators of the *Ethics* converse during this period? And what was the social function of their thought in the context of this conversation?

1.2 The Meaning of the 'Supreme Good' in a Commercial Society

As was examined in previous chapters, the first decades of the nineteenth century were marked by the advancement of liberal and utilitarian discourses, which emphatically positioned 'man' as the origin of truth and justice (however qualified this statement may have been), and considered the maximisation of 'happiness' as the only justified purpose of individual and social action. Utilitarian ideas, as I sought to suggest, developed on the basis of an ethical vacuum, in the sense that they prioritised an ideal of self-interest which could not form the basis of a moral vocabulary; that is, an ethical code which would include as much the notion of the 'self' as that of the 'other'. What is more, utilitarianism stemmed from the division between individual acts of self-interest and their social implications, and thus provided no other basis for social conduct apart from a cynical adherence to egotistic principles. In this context, evocations of a Christian duty appear at first to have constituted a kind of anachronism. What could, indeed, be the role of a transcendent good in a disenchanted world, which recognised man as its only centre and origin, and money as the measure of happiness?

Yet a closer reading of the translations indicates that they were not as isolated from their social context as they may initially appear to have been. Instead, translators and rewriters of the *Ethics* seem to have been as much engaged with the concerns of their time as they were dedicated to an attempt at providing alternatives to them. The most crucial of these concerns pertains to the idea of personal 'interest' and 'self-love'. Despite their severe critiques of self-interested behaviour the translations in question seek to emphasise that there exists no disjunction between interests and morality, since both act to realise man's divine nature. This argument already introduces a minor, but still crucial break in the dogmatic character of Christian faith. In the context of a dogma one is supposed to follow divine doctrines because they are divine, not because it is in one's interests to do so. So long as one regards faith as a kind of investment, the origin of this faith loses by necessity its transcendent position; it becomes the object of contemplation by which man *judges* that believing in God is a profitable course of action and thus God ceases to be an immanent and untouchable source of truth and judgement. Let us then follow the development of this position in the text of the translations.

One of the important distinctions drawn in Aristotle's *Ethics* is that between voluntary and non-voluntary action – the former following from deliberation and the latter being the outcome of compulsion or ignorance. It is only voluntary actions, Aristotle argues, which can be appraised in ethical terms, since only these render the agent responsible for his doing

Ignorance, it is explained, denotes a lack of knowledge of some conditions which would have affected one's choice, but not a lack of knowledge of the 'good' (iii.i-xii). For Aristotle "moral ignorance – ignorance of what constitutes virtue and vice – is not exculpatory", as MacIntyre points out, "but is indeed what constitutes vice" (1966[1];1998: 70). As it is argued in the *Ethics*

> Τὸ δ' ἀκούσιον βούλεται λέγεσθαι οὐκ εἴ τις ἀγνοεῖ τὰ συμφέροντα· οὐ γὰρ ἡ ἐν τῇ προαιρέσει ἄγνοια αἰτία τοῦ ἀκουσίου (ἀλλὰ τῆς μοχθηρίας) (iii.i.15)[243]

Chase translated the passage as follows:

> Again we do not usually apply the term involuntary *when a man is ignorant of his own interest*, because ignorance which affects moral choice constitutes depravity, but not involuntariness (1847: 75)

The Greek term συμφέροντα derives from the verb συμφέρω (-ομαι), whose literal meaning is 'to bring together', 'to gather' or 'collect' (συν-φέρω). A metaphorical extension of this meaning conveyed the notion of 'being in harmony with', 'agreeing with', 'suiting'. Συμφέροντα are those things which are 'fitting' and 'suitable' and only in this sense are they also 'expedient' and 'useful'.[244] Thus in the context of Aristotle's thought the term συμφέροντα evokes those actions or things which stand in agreement with man's nature, the kind of behaviour which is in harmony with man's distinct trait of rationality and constitutes 'virtue'. Chase's translation of the concept συμφέροντα by the term 'interest' seems to convey the notion of 'beneficial' and ultimately 'profitable', it denotes a condition which works to one's advantage, irrespective of whether this is a condition that accords with or stands against rational precepts. What is more, the term is used by Chase in order to connect a concept of 'virtue' that derives from man's immanent duty to a notion of earthly advantages and gains. As he writes in the footnotes that follow the translation:

> Virtue is not only the duty, but (by the laws of the Moral Government of the World) also the interest of Man, or to express it in Bp Butler's manner, Conscience and Reasonable Self-love are the two principles in our nature which of right have supremacy over the rest, and these two lead in point of fact to the same course of action (Sermon II) (ibid: 75n)

To perform one's duty, it is suggested, is not only a requirement of moral laws; it is also the means of pursuing one's interests and caring for oneself. For the universal rules that define this duty are those that aim at man's personal advantage and benefits. Thus compliance with duty is, in the last instance, a profitable course of action.

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[243] "But the term 'involuntary' tends to be used not if a man is ignorant of what is to his advantage – for it is not mistaken purpose that makes an action involuntary (it makes men *wicked*) (Ross, Ackrill and Urmson 1980[1];1998: 51)

[244] Cf. Liddell and Scott *Greek-English Lexicon* s.v. 'συμφέρω'.

The establishment of a moral code which focuses on the notion of 'duty' constituted a contribution of these translations to their contemporary moral vocabulary that was in many respects far more pervasive and consequential than their religious assertions. As we shall shortly examine, the basic precepts of this code were maintained in translations of Aristotle (as well as the broader moral discourses of the subsequent decades), even when ideals of Christianity seemed to many to be marginalized and socially irrelevant. What is more, the translations in question posited (among other works) the very logic by which the notion of duty would set up an indisputable moral imperative and would appropriate the ancient Greek code of virtue-ethics. This was a logic which took as an *a priori* the absolute necessity to comply with one's obligations, irrespective of whether these were considered as compatible or incompatible with personal perceptions of truth, value or interest. What was then argued was that duty compels human behaviour *qua* duty, and it is in this capacity that it requires man's submission to it.

As such an ethics of duty seems to have developed as a distinct alternative to strictly utilitarian precepts and even at the moments it evoked the idea of self-interest, it ostensibly stood in sharp contrast with the disjunction between individual choices and those social laws and obligations that may limit one's profit-seeking activities. From this point of view, the translations in question attempted to fill in the 'gap' of morality created by utilitarian social practice by constituting an ideal of the 'Good' which aimed as much towards individual salvation as it was directed towards social unity and coherence. As Fitzgerald wrote in the introduction to his edition of the *Ethics*

> It will be proper to mark distinctly the point of difference between the system of Aristotle and that of the modern Utilitarians. It is not that Aristotle doubts or denies the tendency of virtuous conduct to produce the greatest attainable happiness of man, or that a reasonable being requires to be satisfied, that in pursuing virtue, he pursues happiness. But it is that he denies this tendency to produce happiness to be that which *constitutes* actions virtuous, or a regard to it the motive from which the virtuous man, as such, acts virtuously. The happiness of which he speaks is the happiness which springs from the pursuit of virtue for its own sake (1850: 13).

This was not, however, merely an individual pursuit of happiness. Aristotle, Fitzgerald continues "sets out with considering man as framed by nature for civil society ... and incapable of fully developing his energies without it". The only "defect" of the ancient philosopher in this attempt was his "atheism". Thus his moral doctrines can "furnish us with some knowledge of duty" which can be complemented by Christian thought in order to

constitute "a better *country*", "a *city* ... whose builder and maker is god", "a *community* of saints" (1850: 32-34, 40 my italics).

What Fitzgerald wishes and concomitantly prescribes, as the repetitive use of the terms referring to the notion of the community indicate, is an alternative to his contemporary social order, rather than a road to personal salvation. He looks forward to a country, a city, a social context which would distinguish itself from utilitarianism and realise the transcendent ideal of 'Good'. Yet how distinct was this alternative from the utilitarian precepts it sought to reject? How adverse was an 'ethics of duty' to a morality that was born out of the rules of the capitalist market? And to what extent was this ethics radically incompatible with the laws and functioning of this market?

In his analysis of Kantian ethics, which stands as the paradigmatic expression of an 'ethics of duty', Poole suggests that Kant provided a route to market morality that was in many ways much more efficient than the code suggested by utilitarianism. For while utilitarianism took as its starting point the beneficial consequence of market behaviour, Kant's ethics of duty addressed more directly the role of the agent that was necessary to secure these consequences. The modern capitalist market, as Poole explains, is based on a framework of property and contract and thus of rights and duties. Ownership for example involves the possession of certain rights (to use, to sell) with respect to an object and implies a set of correlative duties, that is to respect these rights on all other individuals. To enter into a contract similarly involves the transfer or exchange of such rights, and may entail a commitment to perform this transfer in the future. If individuals were totally self-concerned, they would have had no reason to keep such a commitment (especially where it turned out to conflict with self-interest) because it is a commitment. Neither would they have any reason to respect another's property, simply because it is property. There would therefore be "no practice of doing one's duty because it is one's duty. In which case the concept of duty would have no application, nor would the correlative concept of a right" (1991: 17-18). Yet the order of modern commercial societies makes it necessary for individuals not only to be engaged in self-interested activities, but also to recognise their duty to respect ownership and agreements. Such individuals, as Poole puts it, "must be free *from* complete determination by their self-interest and thus free *to* act as morality requires" (ibid.: 18). While it was Kant's genius to develop an ethics in which the notions of 'duty' and 'freedom' were central, as Poole points out, such an ethics was also at work (in some cases under Kant's influence) in the broader moral discourses of the time, and, as far as the British context is concerned, in translations

and rewritings of Aristotle's *Ethics*. Let us then return to the development of the idea of 'social-ethical duty' as it develops in the translated texts.

While in order to convey the idea of the 'Supreme Good' as a religious concept, translators had to make radical transformations of Aristotle's text, the evocation of man's duty to conform to this good could be more easily sustained by the *Ethics*, or at least those parts of the *Ethics* which cease to be engaged with theoretical contemplation and give us a method to apprehend virtue as the "mean" (μεσότης) between two extremes, and a disappointing list of virtues, many parts of which endorse socially submissive behaviour, an unquestionable compliance with laws and an unqualified acceptance of social hierarchies. For the list of virtues given in the *Ethics* as representing the desirable moral 'mean' and the 'extremes' man should avoid reflects, as MacIntyre suggests, what Aristotle takes to be "the code of a gentleman" in contemporary Greek society, which he seems to endorse. Precisely as in his analysis of political institutions, he treats Greek society as normative, so "in explaining the virtues" Aristotle "treats upper-class Greek life as normative" (1966[1];1998: 67). This part of the source text required only minor changes in order to fit in and reaffirm modern relations of domination, hierarchy and submission.

After establishing that only voluntary acts can be the object of moral appraisals Aristotle sought to make clear that not all voluntary acts are the products of deliberation and rational choice. Thus not all of these acts can be seen as realisations of virtue. Only those chosen acts, which represent the 'mean' among the extremes of vices, are virtuous. For the 'mean' is what reason defines as 'good' and the paradigmatic embodiment of reason can be found in the deliberate choices of the 'prudent' (φρόνιμος) man:

> Ἔστιν ἄρα ἡ ἀρετὴ ἕξις προαιρετική, ἐν μεσότητι οὖσα τῇ πρὸς ἡμᾶς, ὡρισμένη λόγῳ καὶ ὡς ἂν ὁ φρόνιμος ὁρίσειεν (ii.vi.15).[245]

The key concept of the passage for nineteenth-century translators is that of 'φρόνησις', prudence. MacIntyre draws our attention to the problems entailed by contemporary translations of the passage. Φρόνησις, he suggests, is accurately rendered by the Latin term *prudentia*, but not by the English term 'prudence', which conveyed, as has been already discussed, the notion of 'thrift', especially in monetary issues. The verb φρονῶ evoked in Greek the idea of being wise in relation to one's practical life.[246] Likewise, in Aristotle's philosophy φρόνησις, according to MacIntyre, is "the virtue of practical intelligence, of

[245] "Virtue, then, is a state of character concerned with choice, lying in a mean, i.e. the mean relative to us, this being determined by a rational principle, and by that principle by which the man of practical wisdom would determine it" (Ross, Ackrill and Urmson 1980[1]; 1998: 39) "Virtue then is a settled disposition of the mind determining the choice of actions and emotions consisting essentially in the observance of the mean relative to us, this being determined by principle, that is, as the prudent man would determine it" (Rackham 1934: 95)

knowing how to apply general principles in particular situations." It is not the ability to think rationally, to formulate ethical principles or deduce what ought to be done. It is the ability to act so principles would take a concrete form (1966[1]; 1998: 74).

The term is translated as 'prudence' by the majority of nineteenth-century translators. Browne's translation is indicative of the renderings of the passage during this period:

> Virtue, therefore, is a habit, accompanied with deliberate preference, in the relative mean, defined by reason, and as the prudent man would define it (1850: 45)

The translation does not effect any major change of the source text apart from the use of the term 'prudent' as the equivalent of the source concept of φρόνιμος. But what is the meaning of the 'prudent man' in a discourse which is developed as an opposition to utilitarian ideas? The first point that is clarified by translators and rewriters is that the 'prudence' of which Aristotle speaks is not to be confused with a conception of 'thrift' and 'self-interest'. Instead it should be understood as the direct outcome of man's 'natural conscience', which determines what is right and wrong by standing beyond the secular precepts of a commercial society. As Hampden wrote,

> the Prudence which he [Aristotle] *teaches is no calculation of consequences*. It is a *practical philosophy of the heart*, inseparably connected with the love of that conduct which it suggests. Whereas, when we are taught to act on the ground of interest, the prudence then inculcated is a mere intellectual foresight of consequences, independent of any exercise of the heart" (1831[1]; 1862: 139).

To evoke a "philosophy of the heart" as the standard of morality entails a presumable division between civil conceptions of the 'good' and the consciousness of the 'supreme good' given to men by God. It is the good of a consciousness which is formed and animated by the higher truth of divinity, thus standing in opposition to conventional conceptions of profit and interest. The latter, as it is argued, can only be proved to be futile as "a guide to duty" (ibid.: 139). Yet this transcendent ideal is immediately brought much closer to the civil standards of morality by being identified, according to Hampden, with "public opinion". It is thereby possible for Hampden to argue that the eminence of "public opinion" in Aristotle's thought constituted

> a standard of right and wrong inherent in human nature, or what is equivalent to a Conscience. If all agree in praising a certain modification of Affections, and in blaming another, it is clear that there must be some common principles in all to serve as the basis of these unanimous judgements (ibid.: 138).

The foundation of ethical judgements, it is maintained, is the standard of morality proposed by those principles that are commonly accepted by all members of a community. For it is in

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[246] Cf. Liddell-Scott *Greek-English Lexicon* s.v. φρονῶ.

these unanimous convictions, in the conventions and norms which define the good, that the universal standard of human 'Conscience' can be said to reside.

To be sure, 'public opinion' is, in a certain sense, always the basis of an ethical code, since no concept of moral behaviour can develop outside a social community which defines, accepts or condemns people's conduct either in the form of cultural conventions and rules or in the form of institutionalised laws. Public opinions however can be of various kinds. They can affirm, say, the right of all people to self-determination or they can enforce apartheid. What is more, these opinions are not so unanimous as Hampden envisages them, especially when the 'good' at stake may act towards the benefits of some members of a community, while being detrimental for others. In such a context, in which shared ethical codes do not derive from processes of collective deliberation within which participants are morally, socially and politically equals, an evocation of blind obedience to what is held as good by the public can only entail a prohibition of critical contemplation, a servile submission to conventional norms of social conduct and a cancellation of any form of autonomy, self-interrogation, and ultimately thought itself. For the very capacity for thought in a non-trivial sense of the term, as Foucault has suggested, is precisely what allows for a step back from our ways of doing or reacting, for putting those ways forward as a thought object and interrogating them about their meaning, conditions and ends (1984[1]; 1997: 117). A lack of this process of self-reflection, an absence of the potential to rethink and reconstitute what is held to be right and true by a social community cannot claim to posit an ethical standard but only an act of sustaining a *status quo*, whatever this may be.

A similar endorsement of submissive and conformist conduct emerges in the translations of the Aristotelian concept of πραότης, which is defined in the source text as the mean in relation to anger (Πραότης δ' ἐστὶ μεσότης περὶ ὀργάς iv.v.1). The term is generally translated as 'meekness'. Hence Gillies' translation states that "meekness is propriety of affection with regard to the causes and circumstances which naturally provoke anger" (1797:1, 242) and the same rendering is adopted by the anonymous translation published at Oxford (1819: 99), by Chase's (1847: 61) as well as Browne's translations (1850:105).[247] Meekness connotes a Christian as well as a social 'virtue'. It evokes the idea of piously humble conduct which is 'free' from haughtiness or self-will and tends to submit

[247] The translations which differ from this pattern are Taylor's which renders the concept by the term 'mildness' (1818: 137), and Lewes' revision of Chase's work which uses the term 'gentleness' (1890: 120). Taylor's open opposition to Christian ideas can justify his choice, while Lewes' revision should probably be related to the liberal affiliations of the translator.

tamely to oppression or injury.[248] This form of behaviour cannot have been virtuous in Aristotelian terms, as it was openly opposed to the attainment of the well-being of the moral agent, but was well integrated in an ethical code which posited 'duty' as its central concept and endorsed the unequivocal submission to existing rules and social structures.

The idealisation of interest that formed utilitarian principles is limited, but nevertheless not erased in these translations. Its appearance as identical with duty, as maintained by Chase's translation (above), implies more that self-interest is channelled and constrained rather than that it is repudiated.[249] Virtuous behaviour appears as self-controlled, limited action, which allows the moderate pursuit of one's goals so long as these are compatible with the rules that enable the preservation of competitive and hierarchical relations that characterise bourgeois societies. It is precisely this concept of self-constraint that is employed by translators in order to render the Aristotelian virtue of σωφροσύνη, which posits, according to Aristotle, the 'mean' in relation to the enjoyment of pleasure (iii.x.10). Σωφροσύνη is generally translated by the term 'temperance' with the exception of Chase's work which renders the concept by the phrase "Perfected Self-Mastery" (1847: 106). Both translation choices make the same point. The term 'temperance' evokes the idea of self-restraint and moderation in the pursuit of gratification, the suppression and mastery of tendencies for indulgence to any affection or desire.[250] Likewise 'perfected self-mastery' conveys the notion of self-control with a particular stress on the capacity of the social agent to discipline and limit him- or herself. Aristotle's conception of σωφροσύνη, however, did not only emphasise man's self-limitation in relation to pleasure. Σώφρων, in terms of the source text, is the man who chooses pleasures in accordance with the precepts of reason, rather than a puritan. This man is as capable of limiting himself as he is capable of enjoying pleasures in order to attain εὐδαιμονία, worldly happiness. For the translations in question self-mastery is a virtue as long as it entails discipline and control that derive from one's duty, and irrespective of the effect of this control on the agent's happiness.

What is more, self-control, as Poole suggests, is directed to just those paths that are necessary in order to preserve the commercial order and social structures within which self-interested behaviour can operate (1991: 20). That is to say, it is directed towards the maintenance and justification of social relations of inequality, power and domination which stand at the basis of bourgeois societies. As regards this issue translations are in accordance with Aristotle's text. For Aristotle, an ideal of virtue is represented in "the great-souled man"

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[248] Cf. OED s.v. 'meekness'

[249] On a broader discussion of this issue in relation to Kantian ethics, see Poole 1991: 20

(μεγαλόψυχος). This is a man who lays claim to great things which he deserves more than others. As Aristotle writes,

> Ἡ δὲ μεγαλοψυχία περὶ μεγάλα μέν καὶ ἐκ τοῦ ὀνόματος ἔοικεν εἶναι, περὶ ποῖα δ' ἐστὶν πρῶτον λάβωμεν· ... δοκεῖ δὴ μεγαλόψυχος εἶναι ὁ μεγάλων αὑτὸν ἀξιῶν ἄξιος ὤν· (iv.iii. 1-3).[251]

Gillies wrote the following translation of the passage:

> Magnanimity, as the name imports, is conversant about great things, what these are let us first consider; ... A magnanimous man is he, whose character being of great worth, is estimated by himself at its full value (1797 I. 236)

Chase translated the passage in similar terms, adding only the idea that the 'great-souled', 'great-minded' man is just in his high self-esteem and evaluation:

> The very name of Great-mindedness implies that great things are its object-matter; and we will first settle what kind of things ... Well then, he is thought to be Great-minded, who values himself highly and at the same time justly (1847: 128)

Both these translations follow closely the description of this Aristotelian figure. They thus state that the great-souled man is happy to accept honours from persons of worth because he feels that they belong to him, but he is not affected by honours offered to him by the multitude. He is however courteous and merciful towards his inferiors, despite the fact that he despises their unworthiness. What is more, he is justified in despising people who are not like him, for his low opinion of them is a correct one. The great-souled man does not rejoice overmuch in prosperity, nor grieve overmuch at adversity, values only a few things, prefers the beautiful to the useful, is fond of conferring benefits but not eager to receive them, never asks for help from others, and, apart from the above, he walks slowly, has a deep voice and is always conscious of what he says (iv.iii.1-34; Gillies 1797: I. 236ff.; Chase 1847: 128ff).[252]

So complacent a character could not be further removed from the Christian ideals of meekness and humility. However, the same translators who interpreted the *Ethics* as an endorsement of Christian duty and read in the source text an affirmation of the 'Supreme Good' of God meticulously follow Aristotle's description, without perceiving any contradiction between a figure that is "very nearly an English gentleman", as MacIntyre aptly puts it (1966[1]; 1998: 78), and a religious concept of human virtue. It seems that the function of this figure in the translations cannot have been a religious one. The notion of a man "who

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[250] OED s.v. 'temperance'.

[251] "Greatness of the Soul, as the word itself implies, seems to be related to great objects, let us ascertain what sort of objects these are. ... Now a person's thought to be great-souled if he claims much and deserves much" (Rackham 1934: 213-215)

[252] It is worth noting that John Stuart Blackie, who also endorsed the conviction that the truth of Christianity were parallel to the truth of the *Ethics*, did not hesitate to approve "the thoroughly masculine, thoroughly manly, and thoroughly healthy" character of the latter (1872: 157)

claims much and deserves much", as presented by Aristotle and reproduced by translators, entails an affirmation of the secular superiority of certain people or groups and a duty to respect their dominance as the fundamental part of one's Christian duty. In other words, the translations which evoked man's duty to subject himself to God as the supreme good, ultimately locate this duty in the need to preserve a society of inequality. For all traits of this figure, as MacIntyre points out, require a society of superiors and inferiors within which the great-souled man can exhibit his 'excellence' as well as contempt for others. This man "is essentially a member of a society of unequals" (ibid.: 78-79) and it is precisely such society that is sustained and reinforced by the appropriation of this Aristotelian claim by a Christian discourse centred on duty. [253]

2. Morality and Civil Society: Towards a Secular Ethics of Duty

After the middle of the nineteenth-century Christian interpretations of Aristotle were substantially challenged by the publication of Alexander Grant's edition of the *Ethics* published in 1857 and 1858.[254] Grant's work articulated a significant transformation of British approaches to Aristotle which consisted of the dissociation of the treatise from modern ethical systems, and Christianity in particular. This was for Grant a conscious task, which he first pursued in a polemical essay entitled "On the Relation of Aristotle's *Ethics* to Modern Systems" published at the outset of his edition. In opposition to the creeds of the previous period, this essay denied any parallel between Aristotelian and modern conceptions of morality and sought instead to emphasise the historical and intellectual gap that divides the latter from the former. As Grant argued,

> All we need at present is to make it felt, that between the point from which Aristotle started in writing his *Ethics*, and that from which any thinker of the present day or of the last two centuries would commence, – a great interval is set, an interval too, full of powerful influences, during which the whole spirit of the world has been changed (1858: 1 244)

Not only do the *Ethics* differ from the moral concerns and life of the present, but also this present, in Grant's view, is not predominantly defined by a religious spirit. The origins of the

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[253] The only translator who feels the need to comment on the distance between the idea of the great-souled man and Christianity is Browne. His translation includes the passage ("Magnanimity, even from its very name, appears to be conversant with great matters . . . Now the magnanimous man appears to be he who, being really worthy, estimates his own worth highly") but also emphasises that 'magnanimity', as it is described by Aristotle, cannot be viewed to "be consistent with the humility required by the Gospel". Still, as soon as he recognises this point, he is quick to readopt the motif established by the other translators. This unworthiness notwithstanding, he argues, "there is such a virtue as Christian magnanimity" which is equivalent to "the character of a virtuous Athenian", an example of which is found in Aristotle himself (1850: 97).

[254] The first volume of Grant's work was published in 1857 and was reprinted in the following year together with a second volume. These include his essays as well as books i-vi of the source book. A year before the publication of the first volume Grant had published two of his essays in a private edition (1856).

modern world, from the perspective of which Aristotle is read, are found in the secular tradition "of the last two centuries", rather than a divine origin. It is this tradition, Grant argues, which has gradually shed "fresh lights ... upon the world" and "we now look with different eyes upon antiquity" (ibid.: 2.xi). The very first among these "lights", it is suggested, is "the historical spirit", which enables us to see that "human thought can only be known by knowing its antecedents"; second is "the critical spirit, which is neither hasty to accept nor to reject, but which weighs and discriminates"; and third is "the philosophical spirit" which has itself "a certain sympathy and affinity for the speculation of the Greeks" (ibid.: 2. xi-xii). None of these aspects of enlightenment is related by Grant to religion. The articulation of the spirit which drives the knowledge and life of modern society is a secular, human trait and constitution.

Hence Aristotle, according to Grant, should initially be seen through the light of an 'historical spirit' of which his work was part. The *Ethics* needs to be considered as a manifestation of a particular time and development in the world history, which is equally distinguished from an eternal system of morality and from contemporary ethical precepts. We have mistakenly "amalgamated" so "much of Aristotle's thought ... with our own", he writes. For while there is clearly much in the *Ethics* which may constitute "a real revelation with regard to human life", such inclination can by no means be validated when applied to the ancient text in its totality:

> Taken as a whole, however, when we consider this noble treatise in relation to modern thought, we feel there is something about it that stands apart from ourselves, that its main interest is historical, that we look back on it as on an ancient building shining in the fresh light of an Athenian morning (1858: 1. 258).

Herein emerges the first task of a contemporary approach to the treatise: "to ascertain as far as possible, and to make clear, the meaning of these *Ethics from the point of view of their writer*" (1858: 2.xiv, my italics).

From this perspective Grant proceeds to reject all previous interpretations of Aristotle's definition of 'good' in terms of 'transcendence'. Nothing beyond men and human goals determines the supreme good for Aristotle, he argues. Instead the moral system of the *Ethics* "comes to this, that the chief good for man is to be found in life itself". For

> life, according to his [Aristotle's] philosophy, is no means to anything ulterior, in the words of Goethe, 'Life itself is the end of life'. The very use of the term ἐνέργεια, as part of the definition of happiness, shows, as Aristotle tells us, that *he regards the chief good as nothing external to man, but as existing in man and for man*, - existing in the evocation, the vividness, and the fruition of man's own powers (1858: 1. 194-195 my italics).

The distance between this affirmation of 'life', 'vividness', 'human power' and the translations of the 'good' as a divine 'Summum Bonum' could not have been greater. At the turn of the eighteenth-century Aristotle's conception of ἐνέργεια was seen by Gillies as the line which unites imperfect human creatures to God, thus defining the purpose (τέλος) of humanity as lying beyond any aspect of worldly life. In Grant's writings it is not only life that acquires value as an abstract entity, but men's concrete capacity to direct this life and define for themselves its ethical end. Hence Grant's translation of the beginning of the *Ethics* rejects all previous renderings and defines the 'good' in terms of human concepts and purposes. As he writes,

> Every art, and every science, and so, too, every act and purpose, seems to aim at some good (ibid.: 2. 5, n. i.i).[255]

The main purpose of this translation, as Grant suggests, is "to exclude religious associations (as being un-Aristotelian) from our conception of the ethical τέλος [end]". Only then would we be able to recognise that this τέλος, the best of 'goods' which constitutes happiness "is evidently meant to have a definite relation to the nature and constitution of man" (ibid.: 1. 173).

For Aristotle, in Grant's view, this nature was not formed in accordance with a transcendent model, nor was it contingent or accidental. The *Ethics*, he argues, escapes "from pure indefiniteness and relativity by asserting that the standard" for the understanding of human nature and the subsequent definition of life's ethical end "is to be found in the good, the wise, the refined man. This standard is evidently" for Aristotle "the expression of the universal reason of man". Hence the man whose life truly reaches the Aristotelian 'best of goods', he who actualises the universal human nature most perfectly and absolutely is "the educated man". The meaning of the *Ethics* is "that the laws of reason must decide" (1874: 2.91).

On the basis of this reading Grant suggests two novel translations of the terms ἐνέργεια (previously translated as 'energy' or 'activity') and φρόνησις (previously translated as 'prudence'). He rendered the terms as 'consciousness' and 'Thought' (or in some cases 'wisdom') respectively. Hence in his translation of the definition of the 'best of goods' (i.vii.15) he wrote:

> If so, I say, it results that the good for man is *conscious* life according to the law of excellence, and if the excellence be more than one, according to that which is best and most absolutely in itself desirable (1858: 2 34).[256]

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[255] The source text is quoted in the first section of this chapter.
[256] The source text is quoted in the first section of this chapter.

Grant was well aware of the novelty of his translation of the source term by the concept of 'consciousness', which he sought to sustain in an essay devoted to an analysis of contemporary equivalents to the source concept. In this work he argued that the term 'energy', which seems to be related more directly to ἐνέργεια, "has ceased to convey the philosophical meaning of its original, being restricted to the notion of force and vigour" and its consistent employment "has been a material hindrance to the proper understanding of Aristotle". Consciousness was far closer to the Aristotelian meaning, but had to be further qualified. For in the original, Grant suggests, it was not merely related to a contemplative process, but to contemplation that is inextricably related to "life". In saying that the idea of 'consciousness' is implied in Aristotle's concept of ἐνέργεια "we need not overshoot the mark, and speak as if Aristotle made the Summum Bonum to consist in self-consciousness, or self-reflection". That would be giving far too much weight to the subjective side of ἐνέργεια and being unfaithful to Aristotelian philosophy. Instead the term evokes a "conscious vitality of the life and the mind", which "entails the blooming of something perfect" that is achieved through contemplation, but is not quite reduced to it. By the use of the term ἐνέργεια, Grant writes in a passage which owes most of its vocabulary to Hegel, Aristotle evokes "the mind itself called into actuality". Thus defined, ἐνέργεια or its contemporary equivalent, 'consciousness'

> springs out of the mind and ends in the mind. It is not only life, but the sense of life; not only waking, but the feeling of the powers; not only perception of thought, but a consciousness of one's own faculties as well as of the external object (ibid.: 1.193-195).

'Consciousness', it is argued, is actualised as the mind – not the subjective modes of understanding but the mind as an abstract entity – which springs out of itself within life and thereby forms and transforms itself ("it ends back in mind") through a process of understanding itself in relation to external objects (ibid.: 1. 200-201). In an attempt to represent this complex idea in the target language (and possibly as a response to critiques of the choice of the term 'consciousness'[257]) Grant chose to change, in the third edition of his book, the translation of ἐνέργεια from consciousness to 'vitality' in many of the footnotes to the *Ethics*. Yet he maintained almost intact the essay which relates the Aristotelian term to the modern concepts of 'consciousness' and vitality (1874). In the fourth edition he translated Aristotle's definition of the good for humankind as "*vital action* according to the law of excellence" (1885: 1: 451).

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[257] Grant's choice was felt to be controversial and was criticised by the *Saturday Review* in 1858 as 'unhistorical': "Is it possible" the reviewer writes "to depart more widely from the canons of the historical method than by saying for a philosopher what he never says for himself, on the ground that we see he meant it?" (Turner 1981: 352).

Despite his dedication to an historical approach to Aristotle, Grant's reading constitutes an anachronism. Aristotle's philosophy is understood through the Hegelian concepts of 'actuality' and the spirit' (although the source of these ideas is not always acknowledged by Grant) which had no place either in the *Ethics* or any other aspect of Greek philosophy. That Aristotle was not Hegel is a point that has to be made, but need not concern us any further in this context. Equally beyond the scope of my work is the way Hegelian philosophy is transformed by Grant's writings. What is, however, important to examine is why a Hegelian conception of the 'Spirit', termed here as 'mind', is used in order to appropriate Aristotle's *Ethics* and transform the source notions of 'happiness' and 'good' into a modern conception of a progressing human thought or consciousness.

Grant's position begins with the affirmation that there exists for Aristotle an absolute priority of autonomous and rational thought among all traits that fulfil man's nature. The ultimate purpose of human beings is thereby identified with their capacity to understand and articulate judgements, to use reason without reference to authority that lies beyond worldly standards. This idea is sustained both by the employment of the term 'consciousness', which conveys the idea of knowledge that originates in man, and the translation of the 'φρόνιμος', the 'prudent man', as "wise". As Grant writes in the translation of the Aristotelian passage in question (ii.vi.15)[258]

> Virtue, therefore, is a developed state of the moral purpose in relative balance, determined by a standard, according *as the wise man would determine* (1858: 2. 83, my italics).

Likewise Grant translates φρόνησις by the term 'thought' and explains that the ancient notion must be related to that aspect of 'reason' and 'consciousness' that is applied to "the general ordering of life". Φρόνιμοι, he suggests are "the men who take good counsel" with regard to this issue (ibid. 255; 1885: 2. 145); a translation which stands in accordance with his statement that for Aristotle, the principles of rationality must rule.

Reason, however, had assumed many faces in the modern world, not all of which were deemed by Grant to be appropriate as the grounds of ethical precepts. Rationality was not merely a neutral means for scientific understanding. As a form of mathematical, calculative, quantifying means of cognition, and simultaneously a means for appraising the 'right' mode of action in relation to one's goals and interests,[259] it was intimately related to the concept of the 'self', as defined by utilitarian ideals. Instrumental reason, as Adorno and Horkheimer

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[258] The source text is quoted in the first section of this chapter

[259] Max Weber gives an illuminating description of "instrumental rationality". As he argues "action is instrumentally rational when the end, the means, and the secondary result are all rationally taken into account and weighed. This involves rational consideration of alternative means to the end, of the relation of the end to secondary consequences, and finally of the relative importance of different possible ends (1956[1], 1978: 1 26)

have argued, was essentially mediated by the idea of the self and thus became a means whose end culminated in "self-preservation" (1944[1];1997: 30). Such a development pertained most directly to the utilitarian, self-interested logic which governed the social and commercial relations of bourgeois societies. Yet the very function of these relations had to be completed, as has been discussed, by a range of rules for self-restraint that would be seen as beyond self-interest: a conception of duty which would not be contestable by instrumental rationality. While this duty was expressed in the first part of the century in terms of a religious vocabulary, such form could not be easily sustained by the creeds and convictions of a disenchanted society. Grant assumed the role of transforming duty into a secular concept: once he separated ancient from modern ethics, he sought to suggest that the former's glorification of contemplative reason was a premature stage in the advancement of the human mind, while the latter's concern with duty indicated an advancement of the world's ethical consciousness. Hegel comes into the picture in order to confirm that

> in the *matter* of morals the world has clearly outgrown the *Ethics* of Aristotle (1874: 1.388)

In modern systems, Grant argues, "the spirit of the world seems deeper", as it has become more self-conscious of the fact that man is not "capable of realising the absolute, the supreme End-in-itself by means of noble actions and moments of philosophic thought". Instead,

> individual will, and therefore individual responsibility, are now the first thoughts of Ethics. *It is no more a question of happiness, or, as with Aristotle, what is the chief good? but rather, what constitutes duty?* Why is anything right, and why are we obliged to do the right? (1858: 1. 249).

The "good and the joy of life are no longer" the predominant ethical conceptions, Grant argues, and in this sense the spirit of the world seems also "sadder" when compared to its stage at the time of Aristotle. Yet the paramount importance of 'life' and 'happiness' in Aristotle's world derived from the fact that Greek thought was confined to "those conceptions that form the *object* of moral action, the good or happiness, and the beautiful or virtue". With regard to the "*subjective* side of these conceptions – the moral *subject* – the relation of the 'me,' of the will and consciousness of the individual, to the good in life and action" Aristotelian theory does not seem complete. For we can see today that "it is this subjective side of morals which has assumed importance". In modern times it is "duty", "right", and "moral obligation" which "imply bringing home an act to the innermost consciousness" (1858: 1. 249). From this perspective the question of ethics which has mostly troubled and "divided the moderns, is one that in Aristotle's day had never been mooted, namely, *why are we obliged to do any particular right action instead of its contrary*?"

Grant's answer effects a complete and conscious break with an ethics of virtue. In a complex argument which advances by rejecting, one after the other, ancient Greek morality, utilitarian precepts and the idea of duty defined in religious terms, the writer explicitly turns to Kant's 'categorical imperative'.[260] He thus suggests that man's ethical duty consists of this form of conduct which the agent should will to be posited as a universal law (ibid.: 1. 251-2).

This idea stands, indeed, as Grant would be the first to acknowledge, in opposition to an ethics of virtue, from which the very principles of subjective responsibility and duty are missing. Instead, it posits a maxim of morality which is defined by formal consistency (all kinds of ethical conduct must be capable of becoming universal ethical decrees) but lacks definitive content. As Pool explains, the Kantian categorical imperative presumes, by its very formalism, and depends upon a pre-existing conceptual content: the already legitimated principles of the capitalist world of production and commodity exchange, whose function is canonised and controlled by formal reason. Thus, the range of rights and duties defined on the grounds of formal consistency rather than content "provides the framework of justice necessary for commercial society" (1991: 20).[261] What is more, such a framework can only develop on the condition of a cancellation of autonomous judgement as regards the actual moral and social consequences of behaviour. As MacIntyre maintains, insofar as a concept of duty remains purely formal and distances itself from notions of ends, purposes and needs, it suggests that,

> given a proposed course of action, I may only ask whether, in doing it, I can consistently will that it shall be universally done, and not ask what ends or purposes it serves. Anyone educated into the Kantian notion of duty will, so far, have been educated into easy conformism with authority (1966[1]; 1998: 198)

It was ultimately this conformism with and voluntary subjection to authority Grant deemed to be missing from the *Ethics* and found in modern ethical systems. Aristotle's imperfect understanding of virtue, he argued, is mostly evident in the character of the "high-minded" or "great-souled" man:[262] an "appalling" figure who cannot be accepted by modern ethics. The notion of the 'great-souled man', which had been appropriated by the translators of the previous period without any substantial objection, represents for Grant "a certain loftiness of spirit" which is not "prompted by duty; rather it stands quite beside the idea of

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[260] Kant's "categorical imperative" posits the basic principle of his ethical system: "I ought never to act except in such a way that I can also will that my maxim should become a universal law"(1785[1]; 1991: 67).

[261] A similar point is made by MacIntyre who suggests that the doctrine of the categorical imperative "does not tell me whence I am to derive the maxims" which would be universal laws and thus becomes "parasitic upon some already existing morality" (1966[1]; 1998: 197).

[262] The term "high-minded man" is employed in the first two editions (1858: 2. 166-167, 1866: 2. 166-167) and changed into the term "great souled man" in the third and fourth editions (1874: 2. 72; 1885: 2. 72).

duty" and as such should be rejected. Greatness, as Aristotle defines it, "does not evoke any sense of moral obligation", since for the great-souled man

> there is no self-subjection to a law. The great-souled man does not avoid vice because it is 'wrong' (in the modern sense) but simply because it is unworthy of him. Thus he is most essentially a law to himself and above all other law (1874: 2.72)

However fine the other qualities of this character may be, Grant argues, his social disposition "is essentially not a human attitude". No man can stand above law and secular restraints which posit precisely that "conception of 'moral goodness' that has arisen out of later" modern associations (1874: 2.72)

Grant's work not only put an end to religiously oriented interpretations of the *Ethics*,[263] it further enabled the development of a new reading of the treatise, which employed the concept of secular duty in order to interpret the *Ethics* as a work that is mostly relevant to questions of duty, civil conduct and citizenship. In a sense Grant had actually prepared this change, however strongly he may have objected to it. By dissociating the *Ethics* from the notion of a revealed good and by arguing, simultaneously, the contemporary priority of secular ethical precepts, he enabled subsequent translators to read Aristotle through these modern precepts rather than against them and interpret the *Ethics* as the predecessor of an ethics of duty. Thus, while most translators of this period acknowledge the utmost significance of Grant's work for their endeavour,[264] they seem to stand in contrast to his distinction between modern and ancient morality. As Williams puts it in the introduction to his translation,

> Not only do the Nicomachean Ethics lie almost at the threshold of Moral Philosophy. But *they have, perhaps, more in common with modern thought than any other among the treatises of Aristotle of equal length and importance* (1869 vii, my italics).

In this context the relevance of the *Ethics* is no longer perceived as confined to questions of personal moral appraisal. Instead, the treatise is read and translated as an inquiry into the rules of civil conduct, that is, on the nature and perfection of man as a civil citizen.[265]

The philosophical logic which underlies late nineteenth-century translations is provided by the writings of Thomas Hill Green (1836-1882) and Andrew Cecil Bradley (1846-1924), whose work was also concerned, among other issues, with the contemporary resonance of the *Ethics*. While none of these thinkers attempted to translate Aristotle, their

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[263] As a reviewer of Grant's edition wrote in the *Westminster Review*. "Let a man once read through the Ethics with ordinary intelligence, and he can never afterwards countenance the stupid belief in the necessary dependence of morality on revelation" (1867: 44)

[264] See for example Hatch 1879: v; Stock 1886: iv; Welldon 1892: 335.

significance for translators becomes evidenced in the range of references to their publications[266] as well as the employment of ethical concepts suggested by their writings in the translated texts. Both Green and Bradley, as MacIntyre points out, suggested a break with the individualistic perceptions of society developed by utilitarianism. They drew as much on ancient Greek as on German philosophy (Kant and Hegel in particular) in order to question the idea that the rules and shared aims of a community are the outcome of agreements and compromises of individuals. Instead they argued that each individual can only discover his aims and desires from within a range of rule-governed relations to others, that is, in an organised social community. From this perspective, the moral 'good' is seen by Bradley as man's effort to transcend his finite bounds, in order to realise himself anew as a member of a social whole. In this capacity", Bradley suggested, "your finitude ceases as such to exist; it becomes the function of an organism. You must be, not a mere piece of, but a member in, a whole; and as this, must know and will yourself". Likewise, Green believed that the 'good' could not "admit of the distinction between good for self and good for others" since the good is essentially realised in a form of social life in which individuals participate. These evocations of social coherence and solidarity, as MacIntyre points out, placed the individual in a metaphysical context which idealised existing social structures and relations, and culminated in a mere apology for their contemporary societies. Hence the idea of the social whole, in which the individual self is located was seen by Bradley as divided into various "stations", each of which bestows on men different rights and duties. The end of each man, it was argued, is to find his concrete station in the social whole and carry out its duties (1966[1]; 1998: 245-246, 248).

The conception of the 'good' as a worldly, but nevertheless not personal achievement, is expressed in the translations by the progressive abandonment of terms with religious connotations[267] as well as a significant transformation of Aristotle's definition of happiness (i.iv.1-2), which presents the *Ethics* as an argument against utilitarianism. Hence Hatch translates the passage which defines εὐδαιμονία as follows:

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[265] This shift of emphasis from Christianity into civil rules and values took place, as Turner points out, in the time of a transformation of Oxford from a stronghold of the Church into a school for statesmen and civil servants, who would by employed by the liberal democratic state (1981: 358).

[266] References are made by translators to Green's *Prolegomena to Ethics* (1883) and Bradley's *Ethical Studies* (1876).

[267] The term 'meekness' for example, which is closely related to Christian ideas, is replaced by most translations with the term 'gentleness'. See for example Stock 1886: 83, Peters 1881: 122, Welldon 1892: 121, Franklin 1897: 57.

> The masses no less than the *elite* say that *Happiness* is the Summum Bonum, and they are under the impression that 'living well and faring well' is identical with 'being happy.' (1879 18)[268]

The employment of the phrase "they are under the impression", which indicates a presumed distance between Aristotle's thought and what is claimed in this definition, follows a motif that was also adopted by early nineteenth-century translators (or at least those who rendered both the concept of 'acting' and of 'being well'). Yet in opposition to the tendency of the previous period to leave the idea of prosperous life out of the definition of happiness, what is omitted in this translation is the notion of 'acting well'. The definition of the 'Summum Bonum' as a condition of 'living well' conveys more the idea of a good life rather than one lived in accordance with virtue, while the phrase 'faring well' refers to a happy and prosperous life. None of the concepts seems therefore to evoke an appraisal of one's acts in terms of their 'goodness'. Hatch's rendering is indicative of a wider tendency to read Aristotle in such terms. Williams translated the passage as follows:

> Upon its [the highest good's] name almost all men are agreed. For both the untaught many and the educated few call it Happiness, and understand this same happiness *to consist in a good and a prosperous life* (1869: 5)

Likewise Peters made the following translation:

> As to its name [the highest good's], I suppose nearly all men are agreed, for the masses and the men of culture alike declare that it is happiness, and hold *that to "live well" or to "do well" is the same as to be "happy"* (1881: 5)

A last example of this choice is presented in Wilson's translation:

> Well, in name it is agreed upon by pretty nearly the majority of men: for both the *oi polloi* and the refined call it happiness: *only they suppose* that *living well and faring well* is identical with being happy (1884: 11)

The result of this change is a striking one. By rewriting this definition of εὐδαιμονία as a pursuit of success and prosperity (an idea that was not, of course, found in Aristotle) and by implying that such a claim is obviously a mistaken one, or one from which Aristotle's thought was distanced, these translations make at the very outset of the *Ethics* the implicit claim that the subsequent arguments of the book should be read as standing against this conviction. In other words, while Aristotle bases his ethical system on this definition of happiness, what the translations suggest is the very opposite: that the *Ethics* presents an argument which questions the relation of ethical ideals to concepts of personal prosperity and happiness.

Of what then, if not happiness, does the nature of the Summum Bonum consist? Hatch asks at the introduction to his translation. "What constitutes the perfection of man? What is

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[268] The source text is quoted in the first part of this chapter

the ideal towards which all the powers and tendencies of our nature are directed?" (1879:1) The response to these questions is straightforward. Man's perfection is found in

> *a life in community under the guidance of the State*. There is no sphere in which a man's activities can be exercised or his virtues practised, save in the community of his fellows. There is no security for his freedom, save under the protection of the State. Nature herself teaches us so much: the very constitution of man marks him out as a 'social being' (ibid.: 2).

Because of his natural sociability, man can only realise perfection in a community. Yet this cannot be just any kind of community but one in which the authority of the state guarantees and protects individual freedom. Hence Aristotle's ethical inquiry, Hatch concludes, instructs us that "the study of life" in terms of ethical precepts "will therefore be a study of civil life" (ibid.: 2).

Hatch's suggestion that the best of goods has for Aristotle a social and political basis stands much closer to the *Ethics* than any previous attempt to interpret the treatise in terms of religion. For Aristotle, there exists an inextricable relation between ethics and politics, and the knowledge of the 'best of goods', as he argues at the beginning of the *Ethics* can only be attained by the art of politics. The subject matter and method of his book are thereby defined as a "political" issue, while the *Politics* is presented as the immediate completion of the *Ethics*. Yet it is important to clarify that the world πολιτικός (political) is not directly equivalent to the modern term political. As MacIntyre observes, for Aristotle πολιτικός covers both what we mean by 'political' as well as what we mean by 'social' without assuming any discrimination between the two (1966[1]; 1998: 57). In modern society, this identity breaks and the political institutions – codified in Hatch's claim in the use of the term 'State' – are considered to be distinguished from social (that is, civil) life, although the former are also intimately related to the latter by ensuring the 'protection' and 'security' of civil freedom and rights.

When translators come to represent the community within which men can realise perfection they refer to a civil society, which consists of "individuals" and a modern "State" as separate entities. Aristotle develops his argument on the relation of ethics to politics as follows:

> δόξειε δ' ἂν τῆς κυριωτάτης καὶ μάλιστα ἀρχιτεκτονικῆς. τοιαύτη δ' ἡ πολιτικὴ φαίνεται· τίνας γὰρ εἶναι χρεὼν τῶν ἐπιστημῶν ἐν ταῖς πόλεσι, καὶ ποίας ἑκάστους μανθάνειν καὶ μέχρι τίνος, αὕτη διατάσσει· ... χρωμένης δὴ ταύτης ταῖς λοιπαῖς [πρακτικαῖς] τῶν ἐπιστημῶν, ἔτι δὲ νομοθετούσης τί δεῖ πράττειν καὶ τίνων ἀπέχεσθαι, τὸ ταύτης τέλος περιέχοι ἂν τὰ τῶν ἄλλων· ὥστε τοῦτ' ἂν εἴη τἀνθρώπινον ἀγαθόν. εἰ γὰρ καὶ ταὐτόν ἐστιν ἑνὶ καὶ πόλει, μεῖζον γε καὶ τελειότερον τὸ τῆς πόλεως φαίνεται καὶ λαβεῖν καὶ σώζειν· (1.2. 4-8).

It seems then that the 'best good' is the object of the most important and authoritative art, which seems to be the art of politics, Aristotle argues. For it is this art which determines which of the other sciences should be studied in the cities, which branches of them should be learned by the different ranks of citizens and up to what point. Since the rest of the sciences are employed by politics, and since politics legislates what men should do and what they should refrain from, the end of this art must include the end of all others. It follows that this end must be the good of man. For even if this end is the same for every single man and for the city, that of the city seems to be greater and more perfect to attain or to preserve.

Williams translated the passage as follows:

> It would seem to be the object of that art which is the master art, and so the most supreme. And such, manifestly is the art political. *For this it is that determines what branches of knowledge ought to be pursued in States*, and which are to be studied by the *individual citizens*, and up to what point. ... And so, since this art uses as its instruments all the other practical branches of knowledge, and further lays down general principles as to what must be done and what avoided, its end will comprehend the end of all these other arts, and will consequently be the supreme human good. *For, although the end of the individual and of the State may perhaps be identical, yet that of the State is evidently a grander and more complete object both to win and to preserve* (1869: 3 my italics).

All subsequent translations of the passage follow Williams' rendering without any major discrepancies. No translator avoids the use of the term 'State' as the equivalent of the concept of the city (although some choose not to capitalise the term). Equally consistent is the employment of the terms 'individual citizens' and 'individuals' as the translations of the notions of 'citizens' and 'men'. (Most translations use the term 'individuals' in both cases). The source concept of 'political art' is translated by the terms 'politics', 'political art' or 'political science', with the only exception of Hatch's translation, which speaks about the "*Science of Society* as being the science which ordains what other science shall find a home in States" (1879: 13, my italics).

The changes are far from being insignificant. The term 'State', whose capitalisation evokes the notion of the political institution, is differentiated in the translation from individuals. What is more, the end of these "individuals", as the translator writes, *may* or *may not* be identical to the ends of the state, but in any case should be subjected to state-authority. Aristotle could not have conceived of such a separation and does not draw an opposition between personal aims and the aims of the city. What the source text says is that even though the 'good' of man and the good of the city *are* the same,[269] that of the city seems more

[269] This point is evident in both Rackham's (1934: 7) and Ross, Ackrill and Urmson's translations (1980[1];1998: 2).

"perfect", in the sense that it realises the good of man in the most excellent way. The 'good' of the city does not stand in contrast with men's happiness in the context of classical Greek thought. It is only in a society whose very unity is founded on the basis of antagonism and conflict, and in which men's freedom is essentially cancelled by being restricted to the civil realm, that the 'State', as an entity that is separated from the social community, can be evoked as the embodiment of the "grander" and "more complete" good to which people's goals must be subsumed.

In this society men are not required to realise virtue in the sense of excellence. Instead, they need to develop a moral consciousness, in the sense given to the term by Grant: a conception of 'duties', 'rights' and 'moral obligations' that are defined by the consistency of formal reason and conform to existing rules of bourgeois society. And indeed, Grant's suggestion to translate Aristotle's concept of ἐνέργεια by the term 'consciousness' had an important influence on late nineteenth-century translators, who employ the term in order to render both Aristotle's definition of virtue as "moral action *consciously* accompanied by reason" (Williams 1869:17) and the definition of 'prudence' and the 'good'. Williams' translation suggests that prudence is "a *conscious* habit of correct reasoning on matters of action, concerned with that which is good for man (1869: 189; *Ethics* xi.v.6, my italics), while Hatch speaks about the good as "a *conscious* exercise of the faculties in conformity with the law of virtue" (1879: 37; *Ethics* i.vii.15, my italics).[270] Greenwood explains in his translation that the prudent man, who has the "truth-attaining intellectual quality concerned with doing things" and has therefore "practical wisdom" is not one who exercises "a selfish unsocial consideration of [his] own individual interests". The prudent man,

> the φρόνιμος must act as what Nature intends him to be, the member of a community (1909: 151).

Read from this perspective, the Aristotelian figure of the 'great-souled man' (iv.iii.1-3), whom Grant criticised because he fails to subject himself to the law, is transformed in the translations into the very embodiment of "moral elevation" or is left untranslated. Hatch translated the passage which defines μεγαλοψυχία as follows:

> Now the objects wherein *Moral Elevation* is displayed, seem, from the very force of the term, to be objects of greatness. The man then who has this characteristic of Moral Elevation seems to be one' who esteems himself of high worth, and whose life is worthy of his profession (1879: 207).[271]

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[270] The source text is quoted in the first part of the chapter.
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Wilson uses the Greek term μεγαλοψυχία in his translation (1884:165), thus indicating a refusal to incorporate the concept of the great-souled man into the vocabulary of modern ethical systems. The logic which underlies both translations had already been articulated by Grant's work: an ethics of duty posits rules that cannot be broken by any individual, no matter how charismatic, skilful or talented he may be. The laws of civil society must be fundamentally defined by their formal consistency.

That this principle could only act to sustain social conformism and subjection to already established authorities not only becomes evident in the employment of the notion of the "State" in the above translations, but also in the rendering of one aspect of Aristotle's conception of justice, which suggests precisely the identity of the "just" and the "lawful" man. As Aristotle writes

> ἐπεὶ δ' ὁ παράνομος ἄδικος ἦν ὁ δὲ νόμιμος δίκαιος, δῆλον ὅτι παντα τὰ νόμιμά ἐστὶ πως δίκαια· τά τε γὰρ ὡρισμένα ὑπὸ τῆς νομοθετικῆς νόμιμά ἐστι, καὶ ἕκαστον τούτων δίκαιον εἶναι φαμέν. οἱ δὲ νόμαι ἀγορεύουσι περὶ ἁπάντων στοχαζόμενοι ἢ τοῦ κοινῇ συμφέροντος πᾶσιν [ἢ τοῖς ἀρίστοις] ἢ τοῖς κυρίοις κατ' ἀρετὴν ἢ κατ' ἄλλον τινὰ τρόπον τοιοῦτον· ὥστε ἕνα μὲν τρόπον δίκαια λέγομεν τὰ ποιητικὰ καὶ φυλακτικὰ τῆς εὐδαιμονίας καὶ τῶν μορίων αὐτῆς τῇ πολιτικῇ κοινωνίᾳ (v.i.12).[272]

Williams translated the passage as follows:

> Again, since we said that the transgressor of the law was unjust and that he was just who observed the law, it is clear that all that the law commands is in a sense just. Now the commands of law are co-extensive with the axioms of the science of legislation, and we hold that each and every one of these commands is just. *Law, moreover, is universal in its range*, its object being either that which is for the *interest* of all, or that which is for the interest of the best and noblest, or that which is for the interest of the powerful few, while it adopts for its standard either virtue or some other similar criterion. And hence, in one acceptation of the term 'just,' we apply it to all such acts as tend to produce or to preserve for the body politic *either happiness as a whole, or any of its constituents* (1869: 140-1).

Aristotle's position, as MacIntyre observes, constitutes one of those moments of the *Ethics* which is not sustained by argument. When Aristotle's discussion of justice comes up against the use of the term δίκαιος, and questions whether the term means either 'fair' or 'right' or 'in accordance with the laws' it is simply asserted that everything unfair is unlawful and everything unlawful unfair (1966[1]; 1998: 79). Williams' translation maintains this part of the argument, which is in accordance with late nineteenth-century conceptions of the 'laws' and

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[272] "Since the lawless man was seen to be unjust and the law-abiding man just, evidently all lawful acts are in a sense just acts; for the acts laid down by the legislative art are lawful, and each of these, we say, is just. Now the laws in their enactments on all subjects aim at the common advantage either of all or of the best or of those who hold power, or something of the sort; so that in one sense we call those acts just that tend to produce and preserve happiness and its components for the political society (Ross, Ackrill and Urmson 1980[1], 1998: 107-108).

of 'justice'. It adds however the idea that "law is universal in its range" which is the translation of the source phrase "the laws posit enactments on all subjects" (οἱ δὲ νόμοι ἀγορεύουσι περὶ ἁπάντων στοχαζόμενοι). Such a change can be attributed to the conviction of the translator that the fundamental feature of ethical precepts is their *universal* validity; an idea which Grant had already elaborated by employing Kant's categorical imperative. What is more, Williams' translation suggests a transformation of the last phrase of the passage, writing that the term 'just' applies to all those acts which tend to produce for the body politic *either* happiness as a whole *or* any of its constituents, while Aristotle refers to those acts which produce happiness *and* its components for political society.

Happiness as a whole constitutes for Aristotle 'perfect good', which is defined at this point as the good of society as a whole, in which the good of men as citizens is included. The particular conceptions of happiness are the good of people in their different social roles, within which they realise particular forms of virtue. The two notions of the good are in harmony in the context of ancient ethics. The attainment of happiness at the level of the *polis* is not distinguished from the well-being of people. Each of them feeds on and sustains the other. Yet Aristotle's position is far from evoking a community of social equality. Virtue ethics, as MacIntyre suggests, stems precisely from and sustains the division of labour and the differentiation of function in early societies by producing a vocabulary in which men are described in terms of the roles they fulfil and the particular good of men is related to these roles (1966[1]; 1998: 84). Such a description does not seem to contradict the quest for an ideal of social unity which does not challenge social inequality, but rather entails the subjection of conflicting social needs to the needs of the society as a presumably organic whole.[273] On the contrary; Aristotle's thesis could have well sustained an anti-utilitarian argument or the conviction that there is no essential conflict produced by social hierarchies and stratification in nineteenth-century British society. In this sense, what Williams' choice indicates is an inconsistency which relates less to the source text and more to the conditions of the target society. These conditions produce the unconsciously expressed admission that in a society of unequals the good of the whole and the good of different people or groups cannot coincide; that however strongly such an identity may have been endorsed by translators and rewriters of the *Ethics*, it only acted to impose a false and precarious unity in a class society, within which

[273] For a further discussion of this issue see chapter 3, section 2.3.

what was claimed to be the good for all was merely the good for a dominating minority that stood in direct opposition to the good and interests of the main social body.

CHAPTER 6

IDEOLOGY AND UTOPIA IN TRANSLATIONS OF SOPHOCLES' *ANTIGONE*

From the end of the eighteenth century until the first years of the twentieth, as George Steiner points out, it was widely held by European poets, philosophers and scholars that Sophocles' *Antigone* "was not only the finest of Greek tragedies, but a work of art nearer to perfection than any other produced by the human spirit" (1984: 1). An exaggerated statement, of course, but nevertheless indicative of the status and importance of *Antigone* in European thought during the last two centuries. The play, which has exercised a particular fascination for audiences since the time of its first performance in Athens (442 B.C.),[274] is far from being a marginal work in the Western cultural tradition. As Steiner puts it, "it is one of the enduring and canonic acts", whose meaning has been at once literary, philosophical and political, and whose various rewritings have played a significant role in the formation of all of these aspects of the Western culture (1984: Preface).

Because of its status, it would be a mistake to assume that this work has been exclusively rewritten by translators. *Antigone* has attracted such consistent interest in the fields of philosophical, political and literary thought, that one must consider translation as only one means through which the themes and meaning of the work are inherited. What is more, translation developed as an apparently marginal form of rewriting, with the notable exception of those *Antigones* written by well-established writers (including Alfieri, Anouilh, Brecht, Cocteau and Hölderlin[275]), which seem to belong more to the fields of 'original' literature and philosophical contemplation than to the field of translation. One need not push this division too far in order to suggest that such canonical rewritings of *Antigone* are missing from the nineteenth-century British tradition. The majority of translations that were written during this period tend to follow the source text in a pedantic, utterly scholastic manner, and seem to lack any literary or philosophical aspiration. Their words appear to lead quite securely to the original, and yet this is an original which, in most cases, can only be meaningful in a translation exercise, a text which bears no marks of a living intellect or culture standing behind its production. To be sure, there were certain exceptions to this

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[274] Sophocles was honoured with the political appointment of '*strategos*' of Samos (in 441 or 440 B.C.) because of the success of his *Antigone*.

[275] Steiner's *Antigones* (1986) is, to my knowledge, the most systematic study of rewritings of Antigone in the Western tradition. Yet it is also a study that proves beyond any doubt the 'invisibility' of translations of Sophocles' play. While Steiner examines an impressive range of rewritings in the context of literary, artistic and philosophical production, the number of translations he chooses to discuss is strictly limited to the works of well-known writers, while there is hardly any reference to less 'distinguished' translations of the play. Charlie Louth's study of the work of Hölderlin as a translator (1998) also provides useful insights in this particular rewriting of *Antigone*.

tendency to literalness, among which Richard Claverhouse Jebb's (1841-1905) translation is the most significant example (1888[1]; 1900). In general though, nineteenth-century British translators of Sophocles seem to be far more concerned with following established rules of faithfulness, conforming to conventional values and reinforcing established norms of propriety, rather than producing texts that may aspire to have a more radical cultural impact or challenge their self-imposed invisibility.

This choice of adhering to the source text should not be taken as entailing either a lack of interest in the social relevance of *Antigone* or a conviction that the play was a merely philological object, which had no repercussions for nineteenth-century moral, cultural and political life. On the contrary, all the works of Sophocles, and *Antigone* in particular, were considered as valuable precisely because of their presumed social relevance, their assumed capacity to provide insights regarding forms of personal and social conduct. As Arnold argued in his lecture "On the Modern Element in Literature", the main feature of Sophocles' work was its completeness and unrivalled adequacy, which touched upon all aspects of human nature and social life:

> The peculiar characteristic of the poetry of Sophocles is its consummate, its unrivalled *adequacy*, that it represents the highly developed human nature of that age – human nature developed in a number of directions, politically, socially, religiously, morally developed – in completest and most harmonious development in all these directions, while there is shed over this poetry the charm of that noble serenity which always accompanies true insight (1857[1]; 1962: 28).

What is more, Sophocles' poetry (frequently cited together with that of Aeschylus, but very seldom along with Euripides' tragedies) was seen as representing a world whose social needs and concerns were parallel to those of nineteenth-century Britain. Arnold, who respected Sophocles more than any other of the ancient tragedians,[276] explicitly drew such a parallel by arguing that

> Aeschylus and Sophocles represent an age as interesting as themselves; the names indeed, in their dramas are the names of the old heroic world, from which they were far separated, but ... into these figures of the old world is poured all the fullness of life and of thought which the new world had accumulated. This new world in its maturity of reason resembles our own (1857[1]; 1960: 31).

If then the philosophical and historical writings of ancient Greece were employed in order to justify an intellectual and political resemblance between the classical and the modern world, tragedy gave reasons for articulating a more extended parallel, which evoked a whole mode of life and social conduct. What the Athenian tragedies were deemed to show, as George Eliot

wrote in 1856, was that the Greek dramatists "had the *same* essential elements of life presented to them as we have" (1981: 254).

A basic aspect of this parallel was considered to be the relation of Greek tragedy, and *Antigone* specifically, to the democratic institutions of classical Athens. Tragedy, Grote argued in his *History*, was a product of the Athenian democracy and while many tragic composers came to Athens from other parts of Greece to exhibit their genius "nowhere else were original tragedies composed and acted, though hardly any considerable city was without a theatre" (1846-1856[1]; 1888: 7. 6).[277] This was not a coincidence, as Grote points out, since the subject matter of tragedy, which is "pregnant ... with ethical debate and speculation" can only pertain to a democratic polity. The favourite themes of Greek drama, i.e. "characters of mixed good and evil – distinct rules and duty, one conflicting with the other – wrong done and justified to the conscience of the doer, if not to that of the spectator by previous wrong suffered", all these belong to a democracy that is strong enough to encourage debate, tolerate unfriendly tones and recognise men's conflicting obligations. These are precisely the themes, in Grote's view, "which Sophoclês so forcibly brings in his beautiful drama of Antigonê" (ibid.: 14, 19-20). A similar connection was made towards the end of the century by Jebb, who praised "Sophocles' genius" as much as the historical context of the city within which this could be developed: "The poetry of Sophocles", he argued, "is the expression of a mind in which the happiest natural gifts had been ripened during the happiest years of Athenian history" (1893: 208). But also the entirety of "Attic tragedy" was described by Jebb as "the final outcome of the Greek genius in poetry" and the "perfect expression of the Athenian mind in the best age of Athens" (ibid.: 248).

This belief led to the publication of a substantial number of translations of *Antigone* throughout the nineteenth century. At the beginning of this period, *Antigone* was mainly read in translations written during the previous decades by Thomas Francklin and R. Potter.[278] Two further anonymous translations appeared, both in prose, in 1822[279] and 1823 (the latter reprinted with minor revisions in 1828, 1842, and 1849). George Downes' translation of *Antigone* (1823) and D. A. Talboys translation of the Sophoclean tragedies (1823; reprints

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[276] On this issue see Anderson, W. 1975: 274; Gerhard 1981.

[277] This position has been endorsed by the overwhelming majority of contemporary scholarship. As Cornelius Castoriadis for example has argued, there is no Greek only *Athenian* tragedy. For only in the city in which democracy and the processes of self-institution reached their climax, could tragedy be created as an integral part of these institutions (1983[1]; 1997). For a further discussion of the political role and repercussions of Greek tragedy see also Euben (1986 and 1990); Hall (1989 and 1997); Meier (1988[1], 1993).

[278] The eighteenth century translations of Sophocles by Thomas Francklin originally written in 1758-9 appear in several reprints during the nineteenth century (1806; 1809; 1832; 1886; 1894). R. Potter's verse translations published in 1788 were reprinted only once in 1808.

[279] I have not been able to view this translation.

1828; 1842; 1849) were also published during these years. These were followed by Thomas Dale's verse translations of Sophocles' plays published in 1824, T. W. C. Edwards' translation of *Antigone* (1824), and D. Spillan's translation (1831). In the middle of the century, Matthew Arnold wrote a poem entitled 'Fragment of an *Antigone*' (1849; reprint 1855), which will be considered as a rewriting, but not a translation of the source text. The next translation of the play was by J. W. Donaldson in 1848 and was followed by the translation of Sophocles' tragedies by C. D. Yonge[280] and Edward Hayes Plumptre in 1849 and 1865 (reprints 1867; 1872; 1902) respectively. *Antigone* was subsequently translated by Roscoe Mongan in 1865 (reprint 1880), by Lewis Campbell in 1873 and by John Benson Rose in 1872. The entire corpus of Sophocles was translated into verse by Robert Whitelaw in 1883, a translation that was reprinted twice in 1897 and 1906. *Antigone* was translated again in 1887 by Reginald Broughton and then by Richard Claverhouse Jebb (1888; reprints 1891, 1900). Jebb, a well-reputed Sophoclean scholar, translated the entire corpus of Sophocles' tragedies (1885-88) and his work became definitive for the rest of the century and for some time in the twentieth (until the publication of Gilbert Murray's translations from 1911 to 1948). A further translation of Sophocles' dramas into verse was published by George Young in 1888 and of *Antigone* by A. H. Allcroft and B. J. Hayes in 1889. Edward Philip Coleridge published a translation of Sophocles' tragedies in 1893, based on Jebb's edition. This work was followed by William Hardie's and C. E. Lawrence's[281] translations of *Antigone* in 1894 and 1898 respectively. At the beginning of the twentieth century two further translations of the play were published, one by John Swinnerton Phillimore in 1902 and one by Martin Richard Weld in 1905.

Despite persistent evocations of faithfulness and an attempt to follow the source text as closely and 'literally' as possible, this corpus developed a reading of *Antigone* that was fully embedded in the discourses and value-models of the target context. Translations manipulated and appropriated the source text, at the very moment they sought to recover it with faultless accuracy. Thus, *Antigone* assumed many faces during the nineteenth century: it became one further proponent of a divine order of truth and morality; a paradigmatic exposition of the strength and limits of individuals; or – quite surprisingly, given the theme of the source text – a defender of the submission of individual will to state-authority. The consistency of these interpretive choices shows that the original was no longer read in the target context in the ways that it was perceived in classical Athens. That is to say, the fact that

[280] I have not been able to view this translation.
[281] I have not been able to view this translation.

translators, who were not always in contact with each other and did not necessarily consult each other's works, adopted similar renderings of *Antigone*, which were further consistent with the broader thought-modes and value-systems of their time, entails that the source text did not merely function as the fixed and unaltered product of a given moment. It became, instead, a segment in an historical chain, within which its initial reality was mobilised and transformed, and thus *Antigone* in nineteenth-century Britain was different to *Antigone* in the classical world. What is more, these new renderings were integrated into a broader context of other translations, rewritings of the classics as well as 'original' writings, within which their meaning was further interpreted and redefined. Thus, each of the translations, as José Lambert and Clem Robyns have argued in their description of translation writings, should not be seen as the final component of a static dichotomy, but as a sign in itself, subjected to other interpretations, whose formation is derived from the interaction of different codes and normative models in the target society (Lambert and Robyns forthcoming).

Yet to say that translations of *Antigone* stemmed from an interpretation and appropriation of the original should not be taken to entail an act of subjugation of the source text to the target conceptual framework, which itself remained finite and unalterable. Translations formed, instead, a relatively autonomous space, which was not dissociated from target discourses, but was nevertheless located at their outer limits, at the very intersection between target norms and the source text meaning and culture. From this perspective, the notion of appropriation itself, as Paul Ricoeur has suggested, should not indicate a one-directional process, which would subsume reading and rewriting to the fixed capacities of understanding of the translator. It should rather be seen as the trait of a dialogue between the translator and the text, in the context of which neither does the text reveal its supposedly hidden design nor does the translating subject project her *a priori* understanding, but both translator and text are shaped and transformed simultaneously. This means, for Ricoeur, that the text becomes the projection of a world and a mode of 'being in the world', which is, indeed, made to conform to the translator's concepts and beliefs, but also gives her new and enlarged capacities for knowing herself and worldly context. Thus, appropriation "ceases to appear as a kind of possession, as a way of taking hold of ... It implies instead a moment of dispossession", which engenders the possibility of a new self-understanding that is provided by the written word as it exists within and through reading, interpretation and translation (1981[1]; 1995: 192-193).

This conception of 'appropriation' as a process of acquiring and also of dispossession and self-transformation opens up a fruitful way of seeing the relation between translation and

source text. For what can be entailed from Ricoeur's position is that translation, as the manifestation of a form of reading and interpretation, does not only produce a difference between itself and the original, which stems from the norms and conventions of the target culture; it also entails a novel employment of these norms, which is able to establish a self-critical distancing from them and a potential for their transformation. It influences and modifies the thought of the target community, perhaps as much as it is modified and manipulated by it.

In the next sections, I shall seek to develop this point in relation to nineteenth-century translations of *Antigone*. My reading will seek to show how these translations acquired a densely ambiguous role in the target society. On the one hand, they acted as endorsements of a dominant social discourse on the relation between man's 'autonomy' and the need for subjection to 'authority'; a discourse which was directly related to the ideological motifs that characterised other translations from the classics. On the other hand, the introduction of *Antigone* into the target context entailed the enunciation of ideas that were by no means compatible either with these motifs or with the social conditions that brought them to being. Instead, the process of translating created a gap in the certainty of nineteenth-century bourgeois thought, it gave rise to a discourse of a multivocal and self-critical nature, which does not pertain either to Sophocles' text in itself or to a presumably unitary framework through which *Antigone* was understood at the time; it pertained to *Antigone* in translation.

1. Defining the 'Order of Things': *Antigone*'s Conflict between the Private and the Public Sphere

For the whole of the nineteenth century Antigone was viewed as the embodiment of a heroine who raises herself beyond mortal standards of justice. Having a consciousness of immanent truth and duty, it was suggested, she decides to comply with them and act against the contingent laws of the city of Thebes. From this perspective most translators saw the conflict between Creon and Antigone as an opposition between the eternal values of family piety – which were almost unequivocally related to Christianity – and the unjustified power of state-authority over the moral stance of individuals. Donaldson articulated this position in the introduction to his translation of the play, published in 1848:

> On the general design and leading ideas of this Play, it is quite unnecessary to enlarge. Every reader must see that it is the poet's object to represent, in their antagonism, the duty of obedience to the constituted authority in a state, and the duty of carrying out the laws of religious and family piety (1848: xvii).

It is important to note that while Donaldson describes the ideas of the play as obvious, he feels the need to prevent a misreading of his translation. He is eager to emphasise that every reader *must* see that the poet's intention was to represent a conflict between our debt to society – represented by the constituted laws of the city of Thebes – and one's personal obligation towards divine doctrines, which dictated Antigone's choice.

A similar identification of Antigone's character with the eternal laws of justice was suggested by the translator Plumptre, who argued that Sophocles' work is a paradigmatic expression of the unchangeable truths of divinity, an instrument of "moral education", which would "lead men upwards to the eternal laws of God and the thought of His righteous order" (1865 : xcvii-xcviii). What is more, *Antigone* was not only paralleled, but was claimed to be even truer and nobler than the works of Christian writers. As Plumptre argued:

> Nowhere, even in the ethics of Christian writers, are there nobler assertions of a morality divine, universal, unchangeable, of laws whose dwelling is on high, –
> "In which our God is great, and changeth not," (Oid. King. 863-71)
> of which it is true that
> "They are not of to-day or of yesterday" (Ant. 450-7)
> that they, written on the hearts of all men, are of prior obligation to all conventional arrangements of society, or the maxims of political expediency (ibid : lxxviii-lxxix).

The rhetoric mode by which the argument advances is again marked by an urge to enforce the meaning of *Antigone* upon the reader, to avoid misinterpretation. The beginning of the passage with the negation of any possibility to find a truth that is more noble than that of Antigone, the comparison of Sophocles with Christian writers, which surprisingly distinguishes the former as truer than the latter, the constant repetition of adjectives that denote permanence and universality ("divine", "universal", "unchangeable"), not only stress the truth of Antigone's position; these discursive devices also seek to stabilise the very wording of this position, the univocality and firmness of the translation's meaning.

The text of Antigone, the translators argue, *obviously* represents and legitimises the validity of family and religious duties, as these are prescribed by a divine order. Yet there is so strong a possibility of misunderstanding, of misplacing the truth of this representation, that they need to sustain their position, to confront and reject alternatives. Thus, Jebb's translation presents in the introduction a lengthy discussion of "the moral intended" by Sophocles, in which the scholar acknowledges "the definiteness and the power with which the play puts the case on each side" represented by its heroes. Jebb realises that no matter how noble Antigone may appear, when conceived of as an enlightened heroine "listening to the private conscience", she also weakens her truth-claims, when her "family duty" becomes the reason

for effacing her social responsibility, or when she declares that she would have not done what she did for a husband or a child, as she could have had others, while her brother was unique to her.[282] Jebb further apprehends that Creon's position is also fraught with ambiguities: his verdict defies religious laws and is enforced on Antigone. However, the same verdict represents a social law, it is ratified by the judgement of the city of Thebes which, however contingent and mortal, cannot be straightforwardly appraised as inferior to "individual conscience" (ibid.: xx-xxviii, 164, xxxv-xxxvii). While devoting a significant part of his introduction and footnotes to these possible "misunderstandings", Jebb repeatedly affirms the need to reject them: "A careful study of the play itself will suffice (I think) to show" that the view expressed by Antigone "is the true one":

> Sophocles has allowed Creon to put his case ably, and he has been content to make Antigone merely a nobly heroic woman, not a being exempt from human passion and human weakness, but *none the less does he mean us to feel* that, in this controversy *the right is wholly with her, and the wrong wholly with her judge* (ibid. xxii, my italics)

The situation of Antigone, Jebb concludes, is therefore "analogous to that of a Christian martyr" inspired by the "unfailing statutes of Heaven". She claims an allegiance which could neither be disputed nor cancelled by any human law: an allegiance to family and religious duty (ibid.: xxv).

This conviction entailed the employment of a vocabulary that was Christian in origin throughout the entire body of translations. Hence when the Chorus speaks in the first *strophe* and describes as εὐδαίμονες (happy) those people whose life has not had a taste of bad fortune and whose family has not been struck by the gods, the majority of translators introduce alterations that allude to a Christian conception of life and God's power over it. The source text reads:

> εὐδαίμονες οἱσιν κακῶν ἄγευστος αἰών.
> οἷς γὰρ ἂν σεισθῇ θεόθεν δόμος, ἄτας
> οὐδὲν ἐλλείπει γενεᾶς ἐπὶ πλῆθος ἕρπον· (583-585)

Dale translates the passage as follows:

> What *blessedness* is theirs, *whose earthly date*
> Glides unembittered by the taste of woe!
> But when a house is struck by angry Fate
> Through all its line what ceaseless miseries flow! (1824: I. 248, my italics)

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[282] Jebb discusses this point at length in a footnote to his translation, pointing out that it seems to contradict the validity of the divine law prescribing family piety and be unworthy of the character of Antigone. Although he translates the passage, he suggests (among others) a possible interpolation of the verses (903-912) after Sophocles' death, either by his son Iophon, or by some other poet or by some actors (1888[1]: 1900: 164).

The translation renders the concept εὐδαίμονες by 'blessed', thus using a term with obvious religious connotations, and further employs the phrase 'earthly date' – a concept that is opposed to 'divine date' – in order to refer to the notion of αἰών, which denoted a space in time, a period, and, by extension, a 'lifetime' in ancient Greek.[283] Jebb follows a similar pattern in his translation of the passage:

> *Blest* are they whose days *have not tasted of evil*. For when a house hath once been *shaken from heaven*, there the curse fails nevermore, passing from life to life of the race (1888[1], 1900: 113, my italics).

Apart from the use of the terms 'blest' and 'evil', Jebb's translation renders the source concept θεόθεν ('from the gods') by the phrase "from heaven" – thus setting a pattern for the substitution of the 'gods' of Greece for the Christian God, that would be frequently repeated in his work. The belief that the gods reside in heaven was, of course, foreign to the Greeks, for whom the anthropomorphic nature of divinity necessitated its positioning within earthly limits. Yet the consistent metonymic use of 'heaven' for the term 'gods' in the translation acted to reaffirm the relation of *Antigone* to modern religious thought, and sustain the parallel Jebb sought to draw between Antigone and a Christian martyr.[284]

The relation of Antigone to Christianity becomes stronger at the point where the source text contrasts the law established by Creon and the laws of justice prescribed by the gods. When Creon asks Antigone how she dared transgress the law of the city, she answers that it was neither Zeus nor Justice who established these laws, but Creon himself, and that she does not believe that his verdict, the verdict of a mortal, could be powerful enough to override the unwritten and unchanging laws of the gods. For those, Antigone says, were not written today or yesterday, but have always existed, and no one knows when they first appeared:

> οὐδὲ σθένειν τοσοῦτον ὡόμην τὰ σὰ
> κηρύγμαθ' ὥστ' ἄγραπτα κἀσφαλῆ θεῶν
> νόμιμα δύνασθαι θνητὸν ὄνθ' ὑπερδραμεῖν.
> οὐ γάρ τι νῦν γα κἀχθές, ἀλλ'ἀεί ποτε
> ζῇ ταῦτα, κοὐδεὶς οἶδεν ἐξ ὅτου 'φάνη (453-457)

Plumptre translates the passage as follows:

> Nor did I deem thy edicts strong enough,
> Coming from a mortal man, to set at nought
> The unwritten laws of *God* that know not change.

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[283] Cf. Liddell and Scott, *Greek-English Lexicon* s.v. αἰών.

[284] A similar translation of the passage was written by Donaldson, who also employed the terms 'blest' and 'heaven' in his translation of the passage (1848: 59) as well as Mongan who rendered the term θεόθεν as 'from heaven' but translated εὐδαίμονες as 'happy' (1865: 18).

> They are not of to-day nor yesterday,
> But live for ever, nor can man assign
> When first they sprang to being (1865: 168 my italics)

What the translation suggests is that the unwritten laws which Antigone obeys are not those of the Greek gods. The substitution of the source term θεῶν ('gods') by the term 'God', which is capitalised in the translation, ensures that the concept of an eternal justice is compatible with contemporary Christian standards. A similar idea is conveyed by Donaldson's translation, which renders the source-text concept of 'gods' by the term 'heaven':

> Nor did I deem thy heraldings so mighty,
> That thou, a mortal man, could'st trample on
> The *unwritten and unchanging laws of heaven*
> They are not of to-day or yesterday;
> But ever live, and no one knows their birth-tide (1848: 45, my italics)

Jebb's translation follows the same pattern for the translation of the term 'gods', while further employing 'unfailing' in order to render the source term ἀσφαλῆ, that is, secure, stable:[285]

> nor deemed I that thy decrees were of such force, that a mortal could override the unwritten and *unfailing statutes of heaven*. For their life is not of to-day or yesterday, but from all time, and no man knows when they were first put forth (1888[1]; 1900: 89, 91, my italics)

The concept ἀσφαλῆ νόμιμα is rewritten by Downes as "secure institutes" (1823: 100) and by Mongan as "immovable laws" (1865: 15), while Rose translated the phrase as "the laws unwritten of the deathless gods brought on infallible" (1887: 21).

All of these renderings effect a significant transformation of the source text. For while the idea of a divine, stable order of justice is, indeed, conveyed by the passage, this order is not so sharply distinguished from social conceptions of justice, as is implied in the translations. In Christianity God stands beyond humanly constituted laws, and this is both the reason and the basis for his "infallible" judgement. For the Greeks, however, and the Athenian audience of tragedy in particular, social and divine order are not strictly separable. Antigone's dilemma concerning her religious obligation to bury her brother and her social responsibility to obey the laws of the city do not form two separate groundings for justice. For Sophocles and the Athenians to bury their dead, as Cornelius Castoriadis suggests, was not only a religious but *also* a social law, as to defend and sustain one's country was not only a social, but *also* a divine law (1983[1]; 1997: 285). For this reason, the term 'infallible' is not applicable to the Greek conception of divine justice, whose precepts emerge by establishing their direct connection to social and historical laws.

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[285] Cf. Liddell-Scott *Greek-English Lexicon* s.v. ἀσφαλής.

This point is strongly emphasised by the characters in *Antigone*. When, for example, Antigone speaks to her sister Ismene and seeks to justify her decision to act against Creon's order, she ambiguously describes her deed as a reverent act of infringement, a holy crime. As she says,

> φίλη μετ' αὐτοῦ κείσομαι, φίλου μέτα,
> ὅσια πανουργήσασ'· ἐπεὶ πλείων χρόνος
> ὃν δεῖ μ' ἀρέσκειν τοῖς κάτω τῶν ἐνθάδε.
> ἐκεῖ γὰρ ἀεὶ κείσομαι· (72-76)

The phrase ὅσια πανουργήσασα is not a contradiction in terms in the source context. Instead, it denotes precisely the lack of distance, the essential unity between a notion of laws that is seen as contingent and contestable, and the more stable standards of justice evoked in order to uphold it. The law of man and the justice of anthropomorphic gods, gods which are made according to man's image, stand next to each other and none of them can be imposed on or efface the other.

The translations of the passage in question can be divided into three categories, each of which develops a different rewriting of this idea. The first eliminates the notion of crime conveyed by the term πανουργήσασα, and presents Antigone as the maker of a holy, pious deed. As Downes writes in his translation,

> ... I dear will lie with him, with him dear [sic], *having contrived pious things*, since the time is more during which it becomes me to please those below than those here (1823: 86 my italics).

The phrase "having contrived pious things" erases the negative connotations of the source concept πανουργήσασα and only maintains the notion of 'holiness', denoted by the term ὅσια of the source text. This is far from being an insignificant change. Downes' translation not only suggests an unqualified justification of Antigone's choice which is absent from the source text; it further eliminates the human role in the constitution of the rules of justice. The only order that appears in the translation is an immanent, divine one; a Law by which all other laws can be justified or rejected; a Justice that stands above social standards of judgement.

The second category of translations maintains the negative meaning of the source term πανουργήσασα by employing the notion of 'sin'. As Donaldson writes:

> Loving with one who loves me I shall lie,
> *After a holy deed of sin*: the time
> Of the world's claims upon me may not mate
> *With what the grave demands*: for there my rest
> Will be for ever lasting! (1848: 11 my italics)

A similar logic underlies Mongan's rewriting of the phrase in question:

> I beloved will lie with him, – with him I love, having done *a holy deed in an unholy way* (1865: 7 my italics).

The employment of a religious term denoting the 'unjust' and 'wrong' – 'sin' – as the equivalent of the term πανουργήσασα is a choice that is only ostensibly incompatible with Downes' translation. For while both Donaldson's and Mongan's translations convey the negative connotations of the source concept, they do so by implying that the grounding of this negative appraisal is again an immanent law provided by God, a transcendent order against which human thought and judgement vanish.

In contrast to the above renderings, a third category of translations follows closely the ambiguity of the source text, thus presenting Antigone's act as the object of two domains of justice: a divine and a social one. It is worth pointing out that this choice is made by precisely those translators who seem to be the most fervent advocators of the Christian meaning of *Antigone*, namely Plumptre and Jebb. Plumptre translates the passage by describing the heroine as guilty of a holy crime:

> Loved I shall be with him whom I have loved,
> *Guilty of holiest crime* (1865: 152, my italics)

Likewise, Jebb employs the notion of 'sin' in order to suggest that Antigone is innocent on the basis of religious laws – "sinless" – but *also* guilty on the basis of social ones:

> I shall rest, a loved one with him whom I have loved, *sinless in my crime* (1888[1]; 1900: 23, my italics).

Neither Plumptre nor Jebb seem to be willing to articulate a radical challenge to Antigone's religious image. On the contrary, both of these translators, as was examined, were particularly keen on reinforcing the nineteenth-century parallel between Antigone and a Christian martyr as well as the creed that, in the conflict between the timeless values of God and the laws of men, Sophocles' work shows the power of the former over the latter. Yet the notion of 'crime' does not easily fit in such a religious vocabulary. The criteria for defining an act as "criminal" (rather than sinful) begin and end in society; they stem from social laws and refer to acts which are considered injurious to public welfare. The notion of a sinless crime is literally meaningless, when both its terms are taken to refer to a divine conception of justice. A sin can, indeed, only be judged as such by God, but a crime is a violation of a socially constituted order; an order which emerges in the translations as parallel to a transcendent one, and thereby restricts and limits the latter, despite all conscious intentions of translators to endorse *Antigone*'s religious significance.

It follows that these latter translations constitute a secular, social space for the definition of laws and justice. As such, they are in accordance with the source text and the

secularised conceptions of justice that informed the broader political discourses of the target society. Yet when it comes to the particular forms by which this space is to be constituted, then nineteenth-century translations indicate the cultural and political distance between the Athenian context of tragedy and modern societies, by locating the institution of justice in the private rather than the public realm and thus transforming the source notion of justice into a matter of personal rather than collective attainment.

In Sophocles' *Antigone* one can perceive three main participants in the conflict over Antigone's act: Creon, Antigone and the city of Thebes. The voice of the latter, i.e. the city, is nowhere heard directly, since the fictional context of the tragedy is not a democratic but a monarchic society, of which Creon is the sole and legitimate king. A visible presence of the people of Thebes, in this setting, would have been an anachronism that would have not made sense even to the Athenian audience, not least because of the strict conventions as regards the content and themes of tragedies. Yet the historical context of the play, namely democratic Athens, necessitates that the verdict reached by the people of Thebes is inserted in the words of all of the main heroes, none of whom (not even Creon) can utterly deny the role of the society in the determination of justice. What is more, *Antigone* indicates that both Creon's decision to prohibit Polyneices' burial *and* Antigone's decision to bury her brother are posited *against* such a collectively instituted justice, and this is the reason why they bring about the *hubris* and tragic fall of the doers.[286]

Let us then follow how this dual *hubris* is rewritten in the translations. In the opening dialogue between Antigone and her sister, Ismene, the latter asserts that by refusing to join Antigone, she does not want to dishonour the laws of the gods. She is nevertheless unable to act against the rest of the citizens:

> ἐγὼ μὲν οὐκ ἄτιμα ποιοῦμαι, τὸ δὲ
> βίᾳ πολιτῶν δρᾶν ἔφυν ἀμήχανος (78-79).

Ismene's statement is crucial. While at other points in the play Ponyneices' burial is presented as an act against Creon's order, at this moment it is suggested that acting against the laws of the city (represented in Creon's verdict) is the same as acting against the citizens. It is thus a choice which is not justifiable even on the grounds of personal-religious duty. Ismene's words seem to pertain more to Sophocles' historical time, in which there existed no conceptual distinction between the city, as an institutionalised community, and the citizens, as an autonomous social body, rather than the fictional time of the play. That is to say, it is because *Antigone* is written and performed in Athens, and because tragedy is directly related to the

[286] For a further discussion of this issue see Castoriadis 1983[1], 1997.

democratic institutions of the city, that a character who is imagined to live in a monarchic regime can conceive of and articulate such an idea.

In nineteenth-century translations of the passage the notion of πολίτες, citizens, is substituted for the notion of the State. As Plumptre wrote:

> I do them [the laws of gods] no dishonour, but I find
> Myself too weak to war against the State (1865: 152).

Jebb made a similar choice in his translation:

> I do them [the divine laws] no dishonour; but to defy the State, – I have no strength for that (1888[1], 1900 25).[287]

While in the source text the heroine is presented as standing against the city's laws and citizens, the translations present an antithesis between her, as an individual, and the authority of the state. The capitalised term 'State' used by the translators does not convey the notion of a social body.[288] As was the case with Aristotle's translations, it is employed in order to denote an institution that is strictly separated from the citizens and has the legal power to canonize individual conduct and social processes.

In the source text, Creon's character is no less guilty of violating the *city's* laws than Antigone. His decision to prevent Polyneices' burial and subsequently convict Antigone is repeatedly declared as standing against the judgement and feelings of the people of Thebes by Haemon (731-739), Antigone herself (509-510) and the men of the Chorus (724-725), who hesitate in front of Creon's edict and Antigone's act throughout the play, without choosing to endorse either. Creon's injustice is stressed by the translators, even more perhaps than it is emphasised in the source text. By the same move, it is also transformed into an arbitrary act, the personal choice of an illegitimate ruler, which bears no repercussions for modern forms of authority materialized in the power of laws and state-institutions.

In Sophocles' *Antigone*, Creon's position is ambiguous, it oscillates between the king's subjection to the good of the city and his will to maintain his power and impose his edict on citizens. In the translations Creon becomes a mere tyrant, he evokes an arbitrary power which is forced on the citizens, in the same way an oppressive regime would impose a social order, irrespective of both laws and justice. Although Creon was presumably the lawful king of the city, Jebb argued, the Athenian audience could easily realise that his power must have been illegitimate:

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[287] A similar rendering was suggested by Donaldson, in whose translation Ismene says that "Nay *I* disgrade [sic] no rite: but lack the skill to contravene the edicts of the state" (1848: 11).

[288] When translators refer to the community or the people of Thebes they employ the terms 'state' without capitalisation, 'city', 'country' or 'nation'. See for example Jebb 1888[1], 1900: 45, 47, Downes 1823: 85, Donaldson 1848: 21,23, Plumptre 1865: 157.

> The Creon of *Antigone*, though nominally a monarch of the heroic age, has been created by the Attic poet in the essential image of the historical *tyrannus*. ... He resembles the ruler whose absolutism, imposed on the citizens by force, is devoid of any properly political sanction (1888[1]; 1900 xxiv).

The image of a tyrant who had no right to constitute laws (and is thereby clearly distinguished from the legitimate power and the authority of the state) is further sustained by the translations of the text. Thus, on his first appearance, Creon declares his personal dedication to the good of the citizens, and asserts that the city, as a social body and an institution, has priority over the will of all of its members, including himself.

> ἐγὼ γάρ, ἴστω Ζεὺς ὁ πάνθ' ὁρῶν ἀεί,
> οὔτ' ἂν σιωπήσαιμι τὴν ἄτην ὁρῶν
> στείχουσαν ἀστοῖς ἀντὶ τῆς σωτηρίας,
> οὔτ' ἂν φίλον ποτ' ἄνδρα δυσμενῆ χθονὸς
> θείμην ἐμαυτῷ, τοῦτο γιγνώσκων ὅτι
> ἥδ' ἐστὶν ἡ σῴζουσα καὶ ταύτης ἔπι
> πλέοντες ὀρθῆς τοὺς φίλους ποιούμεθα.
> τοιοῖσδ' ἐγὼ νόμοισι τήνδ' αὔξω πόλιν (184-191)

Plumptre translates this passage as follows:

> Zeus be my witness, who beholdeth all
> Will not keep silence, seeing danger come,
> *Instead of safety, to my subjects true*.
> Nor could I take as friend my country's foe;
> For this I know that there our safety lies,
> And sailing in her while she holds her course
> We gather friends around us. By these rules
> *And such as these will I maintain the State* (1865: 157, my italics)

In the source text Creon speaks about citizens and the city of Thebes. He presents himself as a guardian of the safety of the people and the city itself. In the translation Creon speaks about his 'subjects' and the 'State', thus presenting himself as the all-empowered leader of these subjects. What is more, while in the last phrase of the source text Creon asserts that "such are the laws by which I shall make the city great" (or "I shall uphold the city's greatness") in Plumptre's work the term 'laws' is translated by 'rules' (a notion which evokes a much lesser degree of legitimacy than the notion of 'laws') and Creon ambiguously declares that he seeks "to maintain the State": a phrase which can refer at once to *his* possession of State-authority and the institution itself, but is not relatable to a city governed by its instituted laws, as is the case in the source text.

At the end of this speech, the Chorus endorses Creon's position towards the friends and enemies of the city, and reinforces his power to employ the laws in order to issue orders both for those who are living and for those who are dead. The source text states:

> νόμῳ δὲ χρῆσθαι παντί, τοῦτ' ἔνεστί σοι
> καὶ τῶν θανόντων χώπόσοι ζῶμεν πέρι (213-214)

Plumptre translates the passage as follows:

> ... And thou hast power to make what laws thou wilt,
> Both for the dead and all of us who live (1865 158)

The translation introduces a critical transformation of the original. While in Sophocles' work it is emphasised that Creon has the right to *use* the laws of the city, in Plumptre's work he is deemed himself to have the power to introduce any laws he wills. Creon becomes an arbitrary king and by the same move his act does not damage any similar enforcement of the laws in the context of modern societies. A similar logic underlies Jebb's translation of the passage:

> ... and thou hast power, I ween, to take what order thou wilt, both for the dead, and for all us who live (1888[1], 1900 51)

The notion of laws disappears in this translation. What we are left with is the order Creon may wish to impose on the citizens – an order which derives from an imposition of power and is not deemed to have any rightful legitimacy. This change does not merely intensify the translators' conviction that Creon's conception of justice must be annihilated in view of the eternal justice that guides in Antigone's act. What is further suggested is that Creon's position must be seen as a *personal* and tyrannical violation of the law, whose *hubris* does not entail a questioning of all forms of authority and power. Hence, when Jebb anxiously asks in the introduction to his work "In what sense and how far, does Creon, in this edict, represent the State?" he can easily dissociate him from the otherwise legitimate power of state-institutions, on the grounds that "the Greeks for whom Sophocles wrote, would not regard Creon's edict as having a constitutional character" and "they would liken it rather to some of the arbitrary and violent acts done by Hippias in the later period of his tyranny" (ibid.: xxiii-xxiv).

From this perspective, Antigone is still judged to be right in her judgement. Yet the justice that legitimises her act no longer comes to conflict with the validity of laws and allows no space for the questioning of institutionalised authorities. Instead, this justice is strategically removed from the realm of politics and confined to a private sphere, that is supposedly dissociated from public affairs. Her choice becomes an act of domestic affection and family duty, which can exist as parallel to the political order, and within which individual freedom and judgement are appropriately positioned. Thus, when Jebb describes the main "qualities" of Antigone's character, he can refer to her "intense tenderness, purity, and depth

of domestic affection", which are "manifested in the love of sister for brother ... braced by a clear sense of the religious duty (ibid.: xxvii-xxviii). In other words, Antigone's moral virtue is defined as a private achievement and the justice she follows as a justice that stands side by side to the laws enforced by state-institutions, without any of them being challenged by the other.

This division, which locates justice and morality in the private realm, while affirming the canonisation of the public realm by laws, has developed as a distinct feature of modern bourgeois societies. In a context in which social relations are formed by precepts of utility and self-interest, the field of public life is *de facto* deprived of all references to justice. What this condition implies is that the laws which canonise social behaviour must be able to enforce their validity not in terms of the justice and morality of their content, but because they are laws: as determinations of one's duty.[289] Yet a society constituted merely be such principles, that is to say, a society completely deprived of unity, solidarity and feelings of care among its members (however limited these may be) would not have been viable. A market society, which merely consists of self-interested individuals, as Poole has argued, would not be able to reproduce itself. To believe that it would assumes that these individuals would enter into relationships with each other in order to produce, nurture and thus *care* for others. Yet if we are to make sense of the apparent sacrifice of self-interest inscribed here in the notion of care, as Poole suggests, we would at least need to posit the existence of goods of a different kind to those involved in market transactions and also suppose that there exists a range of human relationships (such as the relationship between parents and child) which are different in kind to the contractual and voluntary engagements for mutual benefit found in the market (1992: 46). Insofar as these relationships play an irreplaceable role in maintaining a social community, but are excluded from the public realm, then it is necessary to form a separate space for their establishment; a space which does not interfere with the regulation of public affairs, but is nevertheless a precondition of their functioning, as it is presupposed to the viability of the society as whole. In modern bourgeois societies, this space was delimited by the private sphere of the family and personal relations, and was associated, as Poole aptly argues, to a notion of "feminine principle of social experience": a range of characteristics, capacities and moral precepts that were connected to a concept of 'femininity', and were, by the same move, opposed to an understanding of 'masculinity' that was associated to the public sphere (ibid.: 48). The logic of this division was precisely expressed in *Antigone*'s translations, which maintained that the two spheres of social life – that of domesticity and

[289] For a further discussion of this issue see chapter 5.

that of public administration – exist as parallel and complementary, while the principles that define the one of them (i.e. the justice that prescribes Antigone's act) need not and should not affect the validity of principles that define the other (i.e. the laws of the state).

This idea was further sustained by Arnold's rewriting of *Antigone* (1849), in which the dilemma between the heroine's personal duty and the laws of the state was designated as irrelevant to nineteenth-century thought and social experience. "An action like the action of the Antigone of Sophocles", Arnold wrote,

> which turns upon the conflict between the heroine's duty to her brother's corpse and that to the laws of her country, is no longer one in which it is possible that we should feel a deep interest (1853[1]; 1995: 12).

This perspective informed Arnold's "Fragment of an Antigone" (1849[1]; 1995); a poem which did not attempt a rewriting of the whole myth of Antigone, but, as the title indicates, consisted of a fragment: a dialogue between Haemon and the Chorus. Arnold's work was not presented as a translation, but nevertheless made evident its relation to the Greek tragedy, by employing both the names and main themes of Sophocles' play. There is no dialogue in *Antigone* which may be considered as the direct source of Arnold's text. Nevertheless, the original play also presents a dialogue between Haemon and Creon, which provides us with enough evidence to attempt a comparison between the two works.

In Sophocles' play, Haemon tries to persuade his father that he is wrong, and while he does not explicitly take Antigone's side he points out that his father's decision stands against the judgement of the whole population of Thebes (683-723, 726-765). The Chorus takes part in this dialogue in order to describe Haemon's words as wisely and timely spoken (681-682). In Arnold's poem the image of Haemon is entirely changed. Both he and the Chorus no longer focus on the ethical and political implications of the heroes' action, but speak about the personal relationship between Haemon and Antigone, and Haemon's feelings towards his father after the death of his would-be wife. In this context, Haemon does not stand against Creon, but openly against Antigone, who is accused of having betrayed their love and being disobedient to Creon's order. As Haemon says,

> No, no, old men, Creon I curse not
> I weep, Thebans,
> One than Creon crueller far
> For he, he, at least, by slaying her,
> August laws doth mightily vindicate
> But thou, too-bold, headstrong, pitiless,
> Ah me! – honourest more than thy lover.
> O Antigone,

A dead, ignorant, thankless corpse (ibid.: 50)

This rewriting transforms Haemon's original views in precisely those ways that sustain Arnold's conviction that the idea of a conflict between individual consciousness and state-laws cannot be related to modern social concerns. Hence this conflict, which gives the basic theme of the ancient tragedy, disappears in his poem. What is presented, instead, is an Antigone not recognisable in Sophoclean terms: a woman who is thought of as cruel to Haemon, overly bold, headstrong and disobedient. That is to say, a woman who fails to fulfil both her feminine-domestic identity and her public duty. While Sophocles' *Antigone* only marginally touches upon the relationship between Haemon and the heroine,[290] in Arnold's poem this issue becomes the most central point for consideration. What is more, it is on the grounds of this relationship that Antigone is judged in the last phrase of the above extract as "ignorant", unable to see the substantive truth of justice – that is, a justice inscribed in a 'feminine' nature, which should not contradict, but should act instead to support the rules that define social life in the public sphere.

The constitution of the private and public spheres as parallel did not entail the independence of these fields of social experience, but their coexistence as mutually complementary and supportive of each other. This idea profoundly informed Phillimore's translation, which sought to suggest that neither Antigone nor Creon can be considered as merely just or unjust, but ought to be appraised in terms of separate categories of justice, all of which are necessary for the attainment of social unity and coherence. In the introduction to his text, Phillimore suggests that Sophocles' play "is permeated with the sweet reasonableness which M. Arnold makes the essence of Atticism" and expresses a "temper which digests contradictions and harmonises all things" (1902: lv). This temper, in Phillimore's view, is constituted by two kinds of justice, i.e. a moral one identified with Antigone's character and a political one related to Creon's rule. The former (a justice that pertains to the private sphere) sets up the principles that unite society, while the latter (a justice that is established in the public sphere) canonises a condition of "war" that instigates and nourishes social progress. As was evident to Sophocles and his audience, it is argued, "the glory of Athens" was not one engendered by peace. It "began in war and bloomed through war". For "peace" is not, as is commonly believed, "the nurse of arts [and] philosophy", but a condition which only "favours philosophical superstition". Still war, Phillimore writes, can generate civilisation once it is controlled and directed by a temper of wisdom, accompanied by sweetness and tolerance, the sprit of εὐβουλία. For it is only this

kind of morality that can transform conflictual relations into the harmonious whole of a social order (ibid.: xxiv-xxvi, lv).

From this point of view, Phillimore presents Creon's *hubris* as a moral and intellectual error, but not as a political one. In moral terms, Phillimore writes, Creon exemplifies the *hubris* "which flouts the sacred claims of burial", while at an intellectual level he "scoffs at the supernatural" revelation of God's order to personal consciousness, since his "practical mind" is unable to apprehend this higher and divine ideal of justice (ibid.: l-li). Yet when judged in political terms, the Creon of Antigone is justified, he cannot be described as a "villain". "The beauty of the tragedy partly depends upon this, that he is not a bad man or a bad king, only wanting in the saving grace of εὐβουλία, as is suggested at the end of the tragedy" (ibid.: lvii). Creon's position, according to Phillimore, is summarised in his initial speech (162-210) in which he declares his devotion to "public duty". So long as he is himself the only legitimate authority which guards public welfare, Antigone's "appeal to the ἄγραπτα κἀσφαλῆ νόμιμα", the unwritten and everlasting laws, "is mere hubris to him" (ibid.: lix). At this point, Phillimore misquotes the source text, which refers to the ἄγραπτα κἀσφαλῆ *θεῶν* νόμιμα (the unwritten and everlasting laws *of gods*) in order to sustain his position. Likewise, his translation of the passage refers to "the unwritten code of Gods which cannot change"[291] (ibid.: 156), thus rendering the notion of 'laws' by the term 'code'; a concept which defines a different category of justice to the one established by the laws of political authority.

The grounding spirit of the tragedy is then found by Phillimore in the harmonious coexistence of the two categories. Hence when, in the source text, Creon condemns anyone who may disobey the laws of the city's leader, Phillimore's translation seeks to associate the force of unquestionable laws with the ideal of unity evoked by the concept of the nation. As the source text reads:

> ὅστις δ' ὑπερβὰς ἢ νόμους βιάζεται,
> ἢ τοὺπιτάσσειν τοῖς κρατύνουσιν νοεῖ,
> οὐκ ἔστ' ἐπαίνου τοῦτον ἐξ ἐμοῦ τυχεῖν.
> ἀλλ' ὃν πόλις στήσειε, τοῦδε χρὴ κλύειν
> καὶ σμικρὰ καὶ δίκαια καὶ τἀναντία (663-667).

Phillimore translates the passage as follows:

> But one shall never conquer my applause
> Who oversteps and does despite to laws,

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[290] Antigone addresses Haemon in only one verse in the play (572) and it is even disputable whether this verse belongs to her or to Ismene.

[291] The source text is quoted above.

Or dreams of playing master o'er the powers
Whomso (sic) the nation might set up 'tis ours,
In the least things, tho' right or wrong, to obey (ibid.: 164 my italics).

The translation renders the term 'city' by 'nation' and further transforms the last phrase of the source text, which asserts that a man must obey the city's rulers as regards both "the small things and the right, and the opposite". The original phrase does not clarify whether Creon argues that one should obey to the opposites of both small and right things or whether the phrase "the opposite" refers to only one of these terms (presumably the small). The translation articulates this position clearly, but renders the antithesis between just and unjust by a different one between 'right' and 'wrong'. The concept of the 'nation', as was discussed in the first chapter, was constructed along with the image of family relations; it evoked a unity that is established in terms of the private sphere and was meaningful only once it had been separated from public affairs.[292] The use of the notion in the translation[293] represents the realm of justice defined by Phillimore in terms of "morality"; a realm that would complement the public condition of war by the traits of private relations: tolerance and sweetness. None of these traits can actually affect the power of laws of the public realm, which must be obeyed not because they accord with justice or because one appraises them as right, but because they are laws. What Sophocles maintains, it is argued, is that "*law is absolute, authority infallible*: that is the position clearly laid down" (ibid.: lix, my italics).

At the same time, however, Phillimore suggests, this authority must be completed by a moral spirit of "tolerance"; an idea eloquently urged in the play by Haemon. This spirit, which is represented, in Phillimore's view, by Heamon's advice to Creon not to seek εὐβουλία alone, is the principle that "harmonises the relations of State and individual" and sets up a basis for unity in the context of war and social conflict (ibid. lv-lvii). This position manifests a reading of Heamon's speech that is not sustainable by the source text, but stems from a society which needs to address and canonise actual conflicts through a rhetoric which displaces and transforms their reality. In the passage in question Haemon says

μή νυν ἓν ἦθος μοῦνον ἐν σαυτῷ φόρει,
ὡς φῂς σύ, κοὐδὲν ἄλλο, τοῦτ' ὀρθῶς ἔχειν.
ὅστις γὰρ αὐτὸς ἢ φρονεῖν μόνος δοκεῖ,
ἢ γλῶσσαν, ἣν οὐκ ἄλλος, ἢ ψυχὴν ἔχειν,
οὗτοι διαπτυχθέντες ὤφθησαν κενοί (705-709).

Have not then one mood, Haemon states, posited only by yourself; do not believe that your words alone are the right ones. For the man who holds that he alone thinks wisely, that no one

[292] For a further discussion of this issue see chapter 1 section 4

can be like him in speech or attitude, this man has a soul which, when is laid open, is found empty.

These words do not suggest either sweetness or tolerance. But more than this, they are far from expressing a morality established in terms of the private sphere. Haemon maintains that there can be no attainment of φρόνησις, no knowledge of truth and justice by one man *alone*. Creon, it is argued, cannot be wise alone – and this is precisely the point which constitutes his *hubris*. He seeks to enforce a law that does not derive from a collective definition of justice and is presented as final and incontestable. Thus he acts against the principles posited by the Athenian democracy. For truth and justice, as Sophocles' audience could infer from Haemon's words, cannot be reached by one man alone and cannot be imposed as an authority grounded on non-social standards. Instead they are the product of dialogue that takes place in the public sphere among equal and free citizens, the product of a society which is capable of instituting itself.[294]

2. *Antigone*'s Translations and the Articulation of Political Utopias

In Sophocles' *Antigone* all certainties on which truth and justice can be grounded are eclipsed. One after another, gods, the human mind and laws are shown to be unable to posit a permanent and indisputable order for society. Truth becomes unstable and contingent, it cannot evoke either the indisputable norms of a religious tradition or the absolute power of existing social institutions. Justice stems from a process collectively undertaken, which questions finalities and entails the essential contestability of laws, as products of human thought and action. Yet this eclipse of certainty does not undermine truth altogether. Instead, by contextualising it and by stressing its social origin, the tragedy also indicates that the demarcation of the limits between the 'true' and 'untrue' is a social necessity; that "without untruth" as Nietzsche wrote, "there can be neither society nor culture" (1979: 92). The tragic arises precisely from the conflict between thought's uncertainty and the urgency of choosing and acting, from the absence of definitive answers to moral and political questions and the awareness of the need to make decisions.[295]

This particular form of uncertainty which is not dissociated from the necessity for choice and judgement was crucial to the constitution of democratic processes in ancient Athens. For a society that posits an ultimate philosophical or religious basis of truth, be it God, Nature, Reason, or Man as an abstract, universal category, acknowledges a non-social

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[293] Phillimore translates the term *polis* by city or state throughout the rest of the play.
[294] For the notion of the self-instituted society see Castoriadis 1975[1]; 1987.
[295] On this issue see Snell 1983: 396.

principle by which it should perceive and order itself, a law which is given as an *a priori* and stands unchangeable since it does not stem from human thought and action. Yet for the Greeks, as Castoriadis has argued, society as well as the relations society entertains with nature are a "creation": the creation of total forms of human life. Society is self-creation and so is the world when it is seen, used and transformed by people. This assumption entailed the equal distancing of Greek thought both from the belief in an absolute order and from a total absence of ordering. If the world were fully ordered, either by natural or God-given laws, then philosophy and politics, as they were conceived of and practised in Athens, would have been pointless, non-realisable. For there would have existed only one absolute system of truths, and only one absolute political institution, which would spontaneously maintain or transform itself. It would have made no sense to ask what is right or wrong, just or unjust. But if, on the contrary, human beings were not capable of creating some order for themselves, by establishing knowledge-claims and laws, then again there would be no possibility of political choice, institution and action (1983[1]; 1997: 274). This conviction formed, according to Castoriadis, the basic principle of Athenian democracy:

> If a full and certain knowledge (*episteme*) of the human domain were possible, politics would immediately come to an end, and democracy would be both impossible and absurd: democracy implies that all citizens have the possibility of attaining a correct *doxa* and that nobody possesses an *episteme* of things political (ibid.: 274).

Once a society recognises the absence of immanent groundings of truth, then questions of truth and justice are posited on the assumption that no norm, law, or human being can give an ultimate response to them; the 'right' and the 'just' must be treated as questions open to deliberation in the public sphere, rather than *a priori* standards.

None of these ideas was foreign to rewriters and translators of *Antigone* in nineteenth-century Britain. As has been discussed in previous chapters, uncertainty and doubt were as prominent in modern thought as was the evocation of an immanent order of things, while the quest for autonomy, freedom and equality became as integral to the constitution of modern bourgeois societies as the establishment of social hierarchies, inequality and power differentials. For this reason, translations of *Antigone* entertained a dual relation to the source text. While on one level they employed and appropriated the play in order to endorse an ideal of submissive social behaviour, on another level, these works articulated a different range of principles, which disrupted the images of absolute order and justice, and brought to light a self-critical discourse: a space in which the source-text's meaning and the political unconscious of the target society intersected.

Thus despite the ostensibly solid religious faith of translators, manifested in the parallel between Antigone's act and Christian doctrines, the undermining of divine order in the source text seems to force its presence into the translations. The truth of God, the truth of absolutist justice, is thereby challenged in these works at the very moment it is posited as an ideal. It becomes evident that "when Antigone looked to heaven", as Jebb writes in a minor, but nevertheless significant comment, she could find no certain comfort" (1888[1]; 1900: xxxiv), precisely because the laws of God could no longer provide the grounds that could justify her choice. This absence of religious certainty is strongly expressed in the source text when Antigone contemplates, before her death, the validity and meaning of the divine laws evoked previously by her:

> ποίαν παρεξελθοῦσα δαιμόνων δίκην;
> τί χρὴ με τὴν δύστηνον ἐς θεοὺς ἔτι
> βλέπειν; τίν' αὐδᾶν ξυμμάχων; ἐπεί γε δὴ
> τὴν δυσσέβειαν εὐσεβοῦσ' ἐκτησάμην (921-924)

Plumptre translates the passage as follows:

> What law of Heaven have I transgressed against?
> What use for me, ill-starred one, still to look
> To any God for succour, or to call
> On any friend for aid? For holiest deed
> I bear this charge of rank unholiness (1865: 189).

Jebb suggested a similar translation of the passage:

> And what law of heaven have I transgressed? Why, hapless one, should I look to the gods
> any more – what ally should I invoke, – when by piety I have earned the name of impious?
> (1888[1]; 1900: 167).

Apart from the translation of the term 'gods' by 'heaven' or 'God', both Plumptre's and Jebb's works follow the source text closely. What Antigone says at this point is by no means compatible with a religious worldview. Her words directly question the semantic stability of the concepts of 'holiness' and 'piety'. They point out that the deed which was considered to be "the holiest one", on the basis of religious laws, merges with its opposite, becomes an "unholy" and "impious" act, and there exists no secure standard by which its appraisal can be finalised. By transforming this statement through their reference to the Christian God, the translators make precisely the same point: they undermine the certainty of absolute truths, they disrupt the permanence provided by an eternal world order, and, by the same move, they open up a possibility for a conception of justice as an historical issue, a law that can only be posited by secular and social standards.

What then are these standards people can posit for themselves? This question remains essentially unanswered in *Antigone*. What is more, the play emphasises that any attempt to construct a unitary response to it, a response that would claim to provide a final conception of human nature and purpose, is bound to be falsified by the plurality of this nature and the absolute dependence of 'truth' and 'right' on such plurality. This conviction underwrites the hymn of the Chorus in the first *strophe* of the play, where 'man' is described as the δεινότερον among all δεινὰ that exist in the world:

> πολλὰ τὰ δεινὰ κοὐδὲν ἀν-
> θρώπου δεινότερο πέλει· (330-331)

The concept of 'δεινὰ' is notoriously difficult to translate because of its ambiguity in ancient Greek. The term denotes something which is marvellously strong and powerful, capable of making admirable things and wonderful in itself, but also something that is fearful and terrible. When used as a qualification for human beings, it further conveys the idea of someone who is clever and skilful.[296] Δεινὰ is a term that has intensely positive and concomitantly intensely negative connotations. So when man is described as the most powerful, capable of wonders, skilful, fearful and terrible worldly creature, then what is stated is an ambiguous, contradictory and inherently open conception of human nature and its social repercussions.

The translations of this passage can be best described as forming a conceptual map, a network of rewritings, by which all of the above meanings are introduced into the target context. Hence, man is first depicted by translators as fearful and strange, the most fearful among all other forms of life. As Plumptre writes,

> Many the forms of life,
> Fearful and strange to see,
> But man supreme stands out,
> For strangeness and for fear (1865: 163)

The standard Oxford translation (whose writers remained anonymous) employed the term mighty and gave in a footnote the term 'awful' as an alternative rendering of the passage:

> Many are the mighty things, and nought is more mighty than man (1823[1]; 1849: 173)

The description of man as 'strange' and unknown to himself becomes the basic human trait in Broughton's, Young's and Allcroft and Hayes' translations, which do not introduce the negative connotations evoked by the concept of 'fearful':

> Many are the strange things, and not one is stranger than man (Broughton 1887: 17).
> Much is there passing strange. Nothing surpassing mankind (Young 1888: 18).
> Many strange things there be, and none more strange than man (Allcroft and Hayes 1889: 8).

A significant number of translations adopts the term 'wonder', which conveys simultaneously the idea of the 'unknown' (and perhaps fearful) as well as the connotation of astonishment and admiration implied in the source text. This choice is first manifested in Downes' translation, written at the very beginning of the century:

> Many are the wonderful things, and nothing is more wonderful than man (1823: 96).

This work is followed by Dale's translation, which suggests a similar rendering of the passage:

> Mid nature's countless wonders none is found more marvellous than MAN (1824: 234).

Likewise, Campbell's translation stresses that of all the strange creatures, the most wonderful is man:

> Of many creatures wondrous strange most marvellous is man (1873: 17)

From a similar perspective, Whitelaw renders the source text as follows:

> Many are the wonders of the world
> And none so wonderful as Man (1883:154)

Jebb suggests a similar translation:

> Wonders are many, and none is more wonderful than man (1888[1]; 1900: 69)

Weld's translation, written in the first years of the twentieth century, also describes man as the most wonderful of all things:

> Many the things that wondrous be
> But none more wonderful than man (1905: 10).

The notion of 'wonder' is not, however, only used in a positive way. It is explicitly related to fear and 'awe' in Phillimore's translation:

> Wonder and awe at large I find:
> No such wonder of all as Man! (1902: 152).

Mongan's translation adopted a different viewpoint, which particularised the grounds of the above descriptions, by suggesting that man is as much 'wonderful' as he is 'wily'. As he writes,

> Many things are wily (*or*, wonderful), and nothing is more wily than man (1880: 13).

The word 'wily' refers to someone who is astute, crafty and inventive, and therefore constructs an image of man as the maker, the creator of things, but also denotes someone who is cunning and sly,[297] thus conveying the negative connotations of the source concept.

Two further translations choose to prioritise the notions of 'power', 'strength' and 'potency' as the distinct feature of human nature, by describing man as the 'mightier' of all things. Donaldson translates,

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[296] Cf. Liddell and Scott *Greek English Lexicon* s.v. δεινός.
[297] Cf. O.E.D. s.v. 'wily'.

> Many the things that mighty be,
> And nought is mightier than – Man (1848: 35).

Rose suggests a similar translation:

> Of works created unto Might
> Sure there is none to equal Man (1872: 147).

Each of these translations is, at one and the same time, equivalent to and different from the source concept. The meaning of δεινὰ appears to elude them at the very moment they seek to capture one of its aspects – and yet this inescapable 'infidelity' seems to lie more in the self-annihilating, contradictory meaning of the source term, rather than a presumed incapacity of translators. Δεινὰ seems to prevent the possibility of a final translation. It presents us with a concept which strongly confirms Walter Benjamin's suggestion that the specific significance inherent in an original work can be fully manifested in its translatability, in its intrinsic potential to bring into being a multiplicity of translations, in which the 'life' of the original blossoms in its fullness by being transformed into an essentially open-ended 'afterlife' (1955[1]; 1992: 71-72). The ambiguous meaning of δεινὰ gives rise to a differentiated, intrinsically plural range of rewritings, none of which is identical to the source concept. And yet this original meaning can only be fully attained through this multiplicity, since its reconstruction is inscribed in the totality of translations, in the entire network of meanings that are formed by the source concept and voice its ambiguity.

Let us then seek to read this conceptual grid[298] created by the translations in question. The first point to emerge in this context is that man, as the 'mightier' of all things, must be seen as the origin of his collective life and thus as the source of substantive truths on which law and justice are grounded. No other power, apart from the human capacity to think, create and act can take upon itself the praise and responsibility for the institution of social order. Yet this capacity and the social products it engenders are far from being transparent and immediately visible to us. Far from possessing an unequivocal understanding of himself and the world he creates, man is, among all things, the 'strangest' to himself. However intelligent, astute or skilful he may be, he cannot claim total mastery over the meanings he ascribes to the world and his life within it. His thought is bound to uncertainty and doubt.

This condition does not entail the absence of all criteria by which human beings can make sense of and appraise their thought and action.[299] What is rather suggested by the

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[298] The idea that translation operates within culturally specific 'textual grids' was suggested by Bassnett and Lefevere (1998a: 5).

[299] Castoriadis suggests that this absence of correspondence between understanding and 'worldly order' indicates that the political dimension of tragedy lies first and foremost in its ontological grounding, which shows (not discursively but through its *presentation*) that "Being is Chaos". 'Chaos' in the world, in which the order that

translations is the necessity for the constitution of standards by which human beings may be deemed to be worthy of admiration or may be judged to be sly, deceitful and fearful to each other. Man cannot claim an absolute, final knowledge, and yet the very process of speaking and describing himself, that is, the constitutive traits of his existence *qua* human being, involves distinctions and appraisals: between true and untrue, right and wrong, just and the unjust. The necessity of drawing these distinctions from a position of uncertainty remains to be explained in the last verses of *Antigone* in which the Chorus asserts that

> πολλῷ τὸ φρονεῖν εὐδαιμονίας
> πρῶτον ὑπάρχει ... (1348-1349).

"Wisdom" as Jebb writes in his translation, "is the supreme part of happiness" (1888^1; 1900: 237).[300] Wisdom is a presupposition of being well and acting well, the most fundamental part of εὐδαιμονία. The translation follows closely the source text, and by this move introduces a conception of wisdom as a social rather than a merely intellectual issue. Wisdom is not defined here as the product of contemplation or the trait of the mind which has attained 'truth'. It stands as the presupposition of worldly life, as the first and foremost grounding of human happiness, and – if we follow the meaning of εὐδαιμονία – happiness in our co-existence with others.

Yet what is the meaning of 'wisdom' (φρονεῖν) in this context? And where could this meaning be grounded, given the eclipse of God, Nature, Reason and Man himself as universal and absolute principles of truth and justice? We have already encountered an answer to these questions given by Haemon's assertion that a man *cannot* be wise alone (705-709). Let us follow this position through Jebb's translation:

> Wear not, then, one mood only in thyself; think not that thy word, and thine alone, must be right. For if any man thinks that he alone is wise, – that in speech, or in mind, he hath no peer, – such a soul, when laid open, is ever found empty (1888^1, 1900: 133).

This statement defines knowledge and judgement as a political problem. It not only denounces the possibility of wisdom as the attainment of a revealed Truth; it further maintains that no individual consciousness can claim to be wise in itself. For truth and justice become meaningless outside the public sphere. In this sense, Jebb's translation brings us back to Kant's thesis, considered at the beginning of this work: that true cognitions and judgements can only be articulated in society – and more specifically in that kind of society in which all citizens have the freedom to participate in the collective constitution of knowledge and justice, as equals. The parallel could be taken a step further. As Kant envisaged no limits in

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prevails is order through catastrophe, that is, a "meaningless" order and "Chaos *in* man, that is, as his hubris" (1983^1; 1997: 284).

his utopian society, Jebb's translation does not address a limited community or a state, but takes man as its object. It thus associates this public sphere to a cosmopolitan perspective and a cosmopolitan society. It is ultimately in such a society, which is not materialised by liberal-democracies, but could nevertheless be imagined through them, that the ideals of democratic equality and freedom could be realised.

[300] The passage is rendered in a similar way by all of the translations examined in this chapter.

Conclusion

Translation, History and Problematisations

In one of his last interviews Foucault announced his intention of writing a history of thought as distinct from a history of ideas (by which he referred to systems of representation) and from the history of mentalities (the analysis of attitudes and types of action[108]). While this project was never undertaken, Foucault suggested that a key element that would define such a history would be the element of 'problems' or, more precisely, problematisations. He argued that what distinguishes thought is something different from the range of representations that underlie behaviour and is furthermore something different from the domain of attitudes that can determine this behaviour:

> Thought is not what inhabits a certain conduct and gives it its meaning; rather, it is what allows one to step back from this way of acting or reacting, to present it to oneself as an object of thought and to question it as to its meaning, its conditions and its goals (1984[1]; 1997: 117).

The most significant aspect of this definition lies in Foucault's choice not to essentialise 'thought', while simultaneously allowing for the constitution of a field within which the meaning, historical preconditions and aims of certain forms of behaviour can be investigated and appraised. Thought, he suggests, is that mode of contemplation which prevents one from considering a system of concepts or a world as the final response to human quests, questions and needs. Yet, while it is sharply distinguished from positivities, thought cannot be identified with something purely negative. It rather develops as the position of problems, a process of self-distancing from a given order, which entails the rewriting of certainties into questions. What is more, thought poses itself as a problem to itself, and thus concedes that concepts, representations, convictions and values that underwrite and sustain one's view of the world are contextually and historically constituted.

While the above definition seems to reduce 'thought' to a form of reflective consciousness, which may not be deemed to differ substantially from traditional conceptions of understanding as a mode of self-critical enquiry in search for truth, Foucault quickly distinguishes his suggestion from these positions by locating thought in the domain of social life rather than pure theorising. He thus defines self-reflection as a kind of dissociation from one's worldly actions. Thought, he points out, is "freedom in relation to what one does", the move by which one detaches oneself from it, establishes it as an object of enquiry and reflects on it as a problem (ibid.: 117). In other words, thought is marked by the disengagement from a given mode of action and conduct, and thus the disengagement from a given mode of social

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[108] The original term (provided by the translator of the interview) is "*schémas de comportement*".

life. It develops as a process through which personal and collective choices become problematised as they are viewed from a position that stems from, but is not immediately determined by them.

But how then is this freedom attainable? Where can one find the concepts which would not simply emerge as the products of their historical condition, but would rather permit the viewing of this condition from a perspective that is somewhat external to it? How is it possible to attain a position which, while being located in history, can also stand beyond certain historical limitations in order to render these limitations visible as questionable and contestable objects?

The instigation of such a move, Foucault suggests, is not to be found in contemplative processes taken in isolation. It derives rather from the world of historical and social action in its intrinsic connection to the ways thought conceptualises it and seeks to address it. For a domain of behaviour to enter the field of thought, Foucault argues, it is necessary for a certain range of factors to have made this behaviour lose its familiarity or to have provoked certain difficulties around it. Such elements, it is argued, result from social, economic and political processes. Yet the role of these processes should not be understood as determinative of the particular directions thought takes, but as the creation of possibilities which may not be pursued for a long time or may never be followed (ibid.: 117-118). Problematisations emerge in the context of social life as experienced difficulties, problems or uncertainties, but these can be grasped as such and posited as issues for enquiry in the realm of thought. The latter is thereby inherently related to, but concomitantly dissociated from the world that marks its engendering. Thought is constituted by establishing both its difference and distance from the world it addresses. Unlike other forms of discourse, it neither expresses nor represents objects; it transforms them into problems; it defines those elements of them that would constitute the object of problematisation; and it provides us with the means for responding to them. This process of understanding a group of existing obstacles and difficulties as problems, to which diverse solutions will attempt to produce a response, defines, in Foucault's view, what constitutes the point of problematisation and the specific work of thought (ibid.: 118).

As this thesis sought to argue, a line of thought that has developed such a problematic can be situated in the discourses on translatability, knowledge and politics that developed in the context of modernity. It should be immediately stressed that this is considered as neither a unique nor a final mode of articulating such a form of reasoning. But more than this, it is not one that would constitute 'thought' in another historical context, in which different social experiences would have produced different problems and responses. Yet in the time and place

delimited by the Western tradition (a term which no longer denotes a distinct geographical area, but refers, in a sense, to a globalised context) it seems that modern discourses on translation, and the broader issues of knowledge, historicity and society they evoked, have set up some grounds for this possibility.

From this perspective, my work has sought to develop two levels of analysis in parallel. On the one hand, it has employed conceptual tools and theoretical viewpoints constituted by modern discourses on translation in order to rewrite them, as well as contemporary approaches to translation phenomena as an historical object. This attempt advanced by a discussion of conceptions of translation from the sixteenth until the late eighteenth-century (with particular emphasis on the latter period) which sought to describe the various uses of the notion of translation as a metaphor for knowledge-processes. In this sense, my reading of these works was meant to articulate and clarify the theoretical lines along which my subsequent arguments would develop, namely the contestability of knowledge-claims and the interrelation of cognitions and judgements to the social and historical conditions of their constitution. On the other hand, my discussion of these metatranslation discourses sought to present and examine them as historical constructs. It thus attempted to define a number of key features and changes that have marked their development, to illuminate their contextual position and finally to suggest their connection to the constitution of norms for the translation of 'democracy' in nineteenth-century Britain. In other words, the first of these levels contributed to the elaboration of a theoretical standpoint from which translations can be examined, while the second sought to delineate some aspects of the historical background against which translations of 'democracy' were considered to stand. In a way, translations of classical Greek texts have also acquired a similar role in my work. In one sense, they stand as the main object of my research. Yet in another sense, they shape, clarify or stress a number of theoretical points as regards the relation of translation to society and politics, which would not have been attainable through purely theoretical contemplation.

I shall then try to sum up the main points that were reached at these two levels and briefly recapitulate the basic arguments sustained by this work. At an historical-empirical level, I sought to describe translation as a socially symbolic act. This was not meant to be a definition, let alone a prescription of what translation should be. The notion 'symbolic' was employed in order to denote the location of translation at the level of language, while emphasising that this level is neither the only nor the ultimate sphere of historical reality, but nevertheless acts as the medium, through which this reality becomes conceptualisable and attainable. The notion 'act' was employed in order to denote the status of translation as also

part of this reality; that is, as a discourse which does not only articulate historical conditions and processes that are external to it, but also stands as one of their constitutive elements.

This relation between translations and their social and historical context is not to be considered as either straightforward or direct. The production of translations rather entails a process of transformations and rewriting of this context, which do not allow for the endorsement of a simplistic parallel between translation choices and social formations, but nevertheless indicate the co-production of translations, translation and cultural systems and the social reality which brings them into being. Two main concepts were employed throughout my work in order to delineate this relationship: ideology and problematisation. Conceptions of translation as well as translations of 'democracy' were therefore examined as dually related to the constitution of modern bourgeois societies in Western Europe, and nineteenth-century Britain in particular: firstly as expressions and ideological reinforcements of the social, economic and political conditions that were established in this context; and secondly as a means of criticising, problematising and challenging these conditions, by calling into question the convictions which sustained and legitimised them.

These two aspects of translations were seen as historically and methodologically inseparable, in the sense that neither of them would have been realisable or reconstructable without the other. Hence the ideological function of the claim that human societies are destined to form a system of hierarchies and asymmetrical power relations became evident when the translations that defended this position *also* indicated that this was neither a necessary nor a universal precondition for the institution of social communities. It could then be argued that this claim developed as a discourse by which a certain social formation, i.e. modern bourgeois societies, conceptualised and legitimised historically instituted hierarchies, which served the interests of specific social groups within them and acted to sustain actual social relations of domination, exploitation and inequality. Likewise, the glorification of the notion of the 'autonomous individual' as the subject of liberal-democratic politics was deemed to have an ideological function on the grounds that the translations I examined not only posited the value of an abstracted individual sovereignty in the context of civil society; they also stressed that this context entailed the cancellation of freedom by necessitating the subjection of individuals to commercial necessities, social hierarchies and the authority of established state-institutions. In other words, the criteria by which translation discourses were defined as ideological were drawn from the translated texts themselves: from gaps, contradictions and inconsistencies, which indicated points of rupture and tension in the ways

the target community conceptualised its historical context and a move towards a critique and problematisation of the social conditions established in this context.

The form of reasoning which informed this analysis prevented any attempt at claiming the universality or scientific neutrality of models employed in contemporary translation research. Thus the main point argued at a theoretical level was that concepts, precepts, modes of classification and explanation that pertain to the various paradigms in translation theory develop as historical constructs. At the beginning of this work, I have sought to locate the discursive and socio-historical roots of a range of concepts and suppositions of contemporary translation theory in the context of modern thought on translation and knowledge. This attempt was not intended to suggest an unqualified relativisation of theoretical schemes on the grounds of their historicity. My aim was rather to posit these schemes as research objects, in order to be able to appraise their usefulness as methods and tools of analysis; to examine their historical constitution in order to be able to employ them, subsequently, as a means of viewing the history of which they are part. The reasoning behind this choice did not only deny any conception of translation theory as decontextualised and ahistorical; it was equally distanced from the endorsement of an all-embracing relativisation of standpoints, which seems to evoke a plurality of opinions as an end-in-itself, and by the same move blurs and diffuses already made choices as consistently as it disables thought altogether.

To be sure, the need to develop a plurality of approaches, positions or paradigms, none of which can claim to have attained a final description of translation in history, is indisputable. Its evocation, which became the key feature of the intellectual and political move of modernity, defined knowledge as essentially engendered within doubt and described incontestable certainty as the symptom of authoritarian thought and oppressive social structures. This move is in many respects irreversible. No knowledge of history can legitimately profess today an objectivity whose underlying reasoning is the absence of perspective. What is more, no perspective can claim to be dissociated from a condition of cultural and social belonging without indicating, by the same move, its role in sustaining these very conditions of its constitution.

Yet it also seems possible that one can assume various degrees of distancing from one's historical context. The notion of belonging can itself only be grasped through a distinction between the internal and external aspects of a socio-cultural space, and thus if one can make sense of the former, one must be able, at the same time, to grasp the existence of the latter. This process of self-distancing must not be understood as the constitution of an intellectual sphere that is situated outside historical time, and can thus maintain the capacity

for problematisation in all historical worlds and contexts. 'Thought', as was argued, is developed in situation, it stems from a certain form of social life and acts in responding to difficulties that emerge in this life. It is thus grounded on the world and becomes actualised in it, yet having already transformed this world by enunciating it, by articulating it in a novel form. Neither does the work of thought need to be understood as leading to a unique standpoint, which would pretend to possess the exclusive right to self-reflexion and criticism. Responses to difficulties can be many and their common ground is not formed by their answers, but by their propensity to view a situation and their position within it as inherently contestable. Herein lies the categorical difference between 'thought' and what Foucault describes as ideas, mentalities and attitudes: the former is moved by a principled self-questioning, as it understands itself as the product and articulation of a world that precludes objectivity and necessitates its partiality; the latter conceives of itself as secure and justified insofar as it denies representation to the problems of the world that sustains it.

One may surely doubt the extent to which the study of translation is related to aspects of our social world which can be appraised as problematic. The reality of domination, social inequality and power differentials that define social experience in the context of globalised late capitalism stands apparently so far from intellectual insights into the nature of cultures, that it seems easy to affirm that our theoretical contemplation is not substantially affected by such conditions, while the latter cannot be influenced by the adoption of one or the other mode of enquiry. What this thesis forgets, however, is that the very capacity for theorising and the institutions that make it possible to reflect on translation and history are established on the grounds of a social division of labour, which does not merely transform intellectual activity into a luxury a few can afford; it further enables this activity at the very cost of confining the majority of our world in conditions that neither instigate nor allow contemplation.

Whether one considers this situation as problematic or, indeed, as a given is a matter of choice between two mutually exclusive assumptions: that human societies are naturally structured on the basis of hierarchical relations or that these relations are the products of certain historical actions and processes, which do not necessarily mark the end of the human condition and history. Both these assumptions are, in a sense, sustainable by the course of human history, which lends itself equally well to two different readings: one that would describe societies as founded on competition, wars, relations of domination and oppression and another that would see in them attempts for the constitution of a different world, that would establish the conditions for social equality, solidarity and autonomy. While both these readings are possible, as we saw in the previous chapters, they are also mutually exclusive.

They thus necessitate a choice. At the same time however, any attempt at choosing between them on the basis of rational argumentation is bound to be based on and determined by an initial leap of faith. For neither of them can be proved to be true and legitimate by merely intellectual contemplation.

The extent to which one's thoughts on translation and culture affect one's historical conditions can neither be exaggerated nor ignored. Concepts and ideas are the means by which human beings make sense of their world, become capable of making choices, distinguish between right and wrong, truth and untrue, and act in relation to these distinctions. In this sense, words become as important as deeds, because they underlie and sustain all forms of human choice and action. One must not, however, delude oneself as to the social resonance and contribution of theoretical contemplation to the shaping of its worldly conditions, which would probably have been different long before, had they been so conveniently manipulatable by intellectual discourses and intentions. Words can stand as acts and provoke actions only once they have already been fabricated, manipulated and limited in the context of institutional and social frameworks, whose organisation and function is not sustained by words alone. Once this limit is recognised, a critical approach to translation cannot only be confined to a reflexive mode of theorising; it should further seek to articulate a problematic that would advance theory's own transformation and transcendence.

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